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NERVES AND THE MAN

W. CHARLES LOOSMORE, M. A.

NERVES AND THE MAN

A POPULAR PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
CONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF
NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

BY

W. CHARLES LOOSMORE, M.A.

BROWN SCHOLAR AT GLASGOW UNIVERSITY

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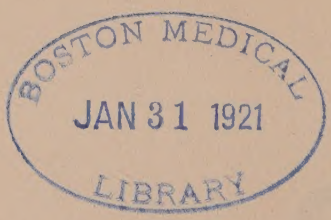

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To

MY WIFE

My warmest thanks are tendered to Mr. T. Sharper Knowlson, at whose suggestion this work was undertaken, to whom also the author is indebted both for most helpful advice from time to time, and for his kindness in reading the Ms. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to Dr. Robertson Wallace, M.B., C.M., who also kindly read the Ms., and who, in his appreciative report, expressed the opinion that "Nerves and the Man" will adequately meet a wide demand.

THE AUTHOR.

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NERVES AND THE MAN

"You cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair."

CHINESE PROVERB.

"We must steady the nerves, strengthen the sinews, enlarge and build deep the foundations of body and of morals in our characters by contact with the soil, by the sweetening, steadying, and calming influences of nature, of sky and tree, and field and water . . ."

MISCELLANEOUS ADDRESSES, *Elihu Root.*

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NERVES AND THE MAN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE ominous phrase "nervous breakdown" is a painfully familiar one to an increasing number of men and women in these days. Happily, it is merely a phrase to the vast majority of us. But, to an ever-growing number, we fear, it speaks of one of the most distressing realities of life. It is because the writer himself knows what the thing is, and because he has had exceptional opportunities of meeting and dealing with many others who also know, that he has determined to publish his experience, in the hope that it may bring a little light into the gloom which mostly accompanies those nerve troubles to which multitudes are victims.

The first note the writer would strike is the note of hope. He is confident that, for most victims of the malady of nerves, there are solid grounds for assurance; and that, given the right outlook, suitable conditions, and obedience to certain simple rules, restoration and renewal are well within the reach of the sufferer. It seems to be a part of the

lot of this special kind of victim, however, that hope is just the state of mind he lacks, and hence he is often found to be one of the most difficult to set free. Still, it is generally true that we are saved by hope; it is eminently true in this particular case. As a matter of experience, it is commonly found that almost the first essential, in dealing with nervous disorders, is to open the mind to hope, which, either in ethics or physical well-being, is the first among the healing and redeeming forces of life.

It is not necessary at this point to describe, in detail, the various weaknesses, pains, fears, and forebodings which usually accompany nervous breakdown. Its victims know all too well the thousand and one clouds that darken the mind which, like the sea, is the home and mirror of storms of varying kinds and degrees. In taking up a book like Benson's "House of Quiet," they instantly recognise a brother in misfortune, in the statement, "I found myself disinclined to exertion, bodily and mental, easily elated, easily depressed, at times strangely somnolent, at others irritably wakeful."

In the class with which we are dealing, the emotions are so lively, and they occupy such a large place in consciousness, that the craving for sympathy becomes almost insatiable. And whilst it is not wise for the sufferer's friends to yield freely to the demand, it is due to the victims themselves to try and understand them, and not to irritate them by giving cheap advice which has no basis in knowl-

edge and understanding. The writer of these pages understands, and it is because he knows the "ins" and "outs" of this most painful and distressing malady that he ventures to hope that the following pages will give hope and cheer.

It should be said, further, that nervous disorders often seem to fasten upon the best and most delicate types. Just as the finest and most intricate machines are most liable to get out of order, so, it would seem, it is precisely those bodies and minds which are fashioned in the finer moulds which are predisposed to go wrong.

"Capacity for pain is the mark of rank," it has been said. Certainly, if that is so, those suffering from nervous breakdown have the consolation that their afflictions are the defects of their qualities, and that whilst their sufferings are many and severe, there are compensations: for if they suffer much, they also enjoy much; if they know the bitterness of the depths, they also know the exhilaration of the heights.

All things considered, the wonder is that the human machine runs as well as it does. When we reflect how the machine is strained and neglected, how we so commonly drain both body and mind, giving little thought to the restoring and renewing processes of life, we might well agree with the old couplet:

> **"Strange that a harp with a thousand strings**
> **Should keep in tune so long."**

In view of the new times ahead, therefore, bringing with them, as they are sure to bring, still more severe and continued strain, it is highly important that we fully realise the nature and causes of nervous breakdown. It is also important that we know something of the lines along which a cure for the trouble may be looked for, and it is to these ends that the following chapters will be directed.

CHAPTER II

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Before attempting to set forth the nature and general symptoms of nervous breakdown, perhaps it would be well to give the reader some general idea as to what the nervous system is. In general terms, it is the mechanism by means of which we acquire our knowledge of the world. The endless number and kinds of sensations which are necessary for the birth of a thought, the formation of a sound judgment, or the forming of a resolution, all come to us by means of the nervous system. Needless to add, it is by this same means that our physical life finds its highest and most efficient expression.

For our purpose, it is not necessary to enter fully into the minutiæ of the system, since it is so extremely intricate that special study is required in order to realise its extraordinary ramifications, and its complex mode of operation. The fundamental unit of the nervous system is the neurone, the protoplasmic cell, along with its out-going fibres. The brain is the principal part of the system, which consists of a series of (1) nerve cells, (2) nerve fibres, and (3) nerve end organs. For the most part, the

nerve cells are located in the brain and the spinal cord, though they are found in all parts of the body. Of course, there are degress of importance in the nerve cells, those related especially to one's thought-life being of special interest. Millions of these are stored away within the convolutions of the brain, and it is largely to these that we are indebted for the extent and richness both of our conscious and subconscious life.

It is said that there is no psychosis without its corresponding neurosis, which means that there is no movement of the mind without a corresponding movement of some part of the nervous system. Thoughts, feelings, recollections, decisions, are severally accompanied by characteristic movements in the brain cells. These actions and reactions are more wonderful than, though very like, a vast telephone system, with its endless wires and connections. The brain is the great centre or "exchange," through which passes an almost infinite number of calls and messages.

There is this great difference, however, between the telephone system and the nervous system: whilst the former manipulates sound waves only, the latter deals with waves of colour, scent, taste, and touch in addition. Further, generally speaking, it is the function of these multitudes of nerve cells to generate nervous energy. It is this energy which expresses itself in sensation, consciousness, memory, reasoning, feeling, and the movements of the body.

As to the nature of nerve energy, comparatively little is known. The theory is, however, that the nerve cell has within it certain chemical compounds, which constitute its energy. Energy having been discharged from the nerve cell, it needs to be replenished, from time to time, before it can do further work. Rest is therefore one of the prime essentials for nerve cell restoration. Further, new reserves of energy are possible only as fresh materials are brought to the nerve cells, by means of the blood. In proportion as the blood is purified and enriched is the nerve cell re-stored with energy.

When it is remembered that the brain and spinal cord contain probably some 3000 millions of nerve cells, we get some idea of the immensity and complexity of the nervous system generally, and consequently the serious results which must follow when, through exhaustion, its natural efficiency is impaired. It has been computed that if we could make a model of the human brain, using for its nerve fibres wires so small as to be barely visible to the eye, in order to find room for all the wires employed, space considerably larger than that of Selfridge's great stores would be required.

Thus we may realise to some extent what a wonderful machine the nervous system is. When we speak, therefore, of nervous breakdown, we are speaking of the breakdown of the most marvellous piece of mechanism in the world. The smooth working of this machine presents us with the greatest

results on earth, a sound mind in a sound body. It conditions the highest thought, the noblest emotions, and the strongest will, which are the marks of the elect of our race. The highest attainments in poetry, art, politics and religion, as well as the greatest achievements in science, war and discovery, each and all are possible only as this vast, intricate and mysterious machine, the nervous system, performs its myriad functions easily and without friction.

But what does nervous breakdown mean, in the experience of those who have come under its dread spell? It must be admitted that comparatively little is known as to what it really is, apart from actual experience.

The term neurasthenia has been explained as "a generalised irritable weakness of the entire nervous system, characterised by hypersensitiveness of the sensorium, loss of mental and bodily vigour, inaptitude for work, disturbed sleep, and irritability of temper; and by muscular weakness, restlessness, nervousness and vague pains; and usually accompanied by various phenomena referable to the vasomotor and sympathetic systems." Some authorities divide the trouble into many varieties. For our purpose it is sufficient to regard neurasthenia as of two kinds, cerebral and spinal. Usually each of these implies the other, and it is rarely found that the one exists entirely without the other. It is spoken of, quite commonly and simply, as "chronic enfeeblement of nerve strength," or "nervous exhaustion," or "functional nervous weakness of the

spinal cord." But whatever terms are used to describe the malady, the sufferer alone knows what the disease really is, and what a dread shadow it casts over both mind and body.

Neurasthenia, in one form or another, has probably existed, more or less, in all times, where the stress and strain of life have been especially severe. It would be an interesting study to trace out nervous disorders in the field of literature. For example, to what extent, it might be asked, is the tragic element in Hamlet,the melancholy Dane, due to nervous exhaustion? Still, there can be no doubt that nervous troubles have become accentuated and more prevalent in recent times. Most authorities agree in affirming that they are steadily and increasingly fastening themselves upon an ever-growing number of the best and most active lives.

It is with some concern, therefore, that one contemplates the future. As a result of the world-wide war, we are confronted with a new order of things in an almost new world. This would seem to mean that the game of life is going to be keener and faster, and that the race will be to the swift and the strong. Hence it is of the highest importance that we know what dangers are in front of us, and what the new pressure of a new age is going to bring in its train. If we are to stand the test, we must not be handicapped and hindered by those nervous disorders which, of all the ills to which flesh is heir, most unfit us for the duties and demands of that coming time of reconstruction which is already upon us.

CHAPTER III

AS OTHERS SEE HIM

It would seem that Nature, sometimes, plays strange tricks with us. Especially does it appear so in the case of the victim to "nerves." Not infrequently, judging by outward signs, there is nothing amiss with him. Usually appearances are all that could be desired. He looks well, has a good appetite, and is inclined to "put on weight." These signs are so common that the sufferer finds himself being told, by innuendo, if not by plain words, that he "imagines things," and that his trouble is more illusory than real.

To the keen observer, however, there are certain outward signs which indicate the presence of serious trouble. The face lacks repose. It is sometimes subject to uncontrollable flushing; the muscles of the face are apt to twitch, and the eyes have an uncertain movement and an unnatural light. When roused, either by anger or sympathy, the man talks voluminously and rapidly. His whole body lacks repose. At these times, it is best to "let him have it out," the stream will run dry, in due course; then the talker will shrink into himself, and become calm, once more clothed in his right mind.

It has been pithily said that for this busy, bustling competitive world three things are necessary for most of us: a clear head, a warm heart, and a thick skin. The type we are considering has not a clear head; far from it. His heart is certainly warm. As to his skin, figuratively speaking, it is abnormally thin, and so he is painfully aware of every east wind that blows. Indeed, the man is a walking barometer. At a sudden clang of a bell, or the bang of a door, he starts as if about to jump out of his skin, whilst his heart beats as if he were threatened with some dire calamity.

The very last place where we should look for a sense of proportion is in a mind upset by nervous disorder. The writer has on many occasions asked those suffering from neurasthenia how the sense of injustice, or a personal insult, affects their minds. In every case, the confession is the same, that it robs them, for the time being, of their due sense of proportion; it arouses such anger and indignation as to amount to positive pain. For weeks, and even months, passionate resentment will last, until eventually the victim sees that his anger was out of all proportion to the offence. Under the stimulus of strong emotion, thought, reason and judgment have fled. He makes mountains out of mole-hills. He gives to trifles immoderate importance.

Reason implies seeing differences and agreements. It means a sense of comparison, and it is precisely

this sense that is absent in most cases of nervous disorder.

Further, in these days, and especially in the days that are coming, it is the man whom we call a "stayer" who is going to count. It is here again that the victim to nervous trouble is apt to fail, and must fail until, by some means or other, he rises above his disability. The trouble in these cases is that the man cannot conserve his energy. He wastes more than he uses. He burns the candle not only at both ends, but in the middle as well. He spends his energy like a spendthrift. He works by fits and starts. He uses up forces to-day which he will require to-morrow. He uses up his strength in unimportant things and, under the stress of strong feeling or passion, he squanders enormous potencies, which not only do no good but do positive harm.

Quite recently, a case came within our notice of a man suffering from nervous breakdown, and who within a few years had obtained and lost eight situations. "Sooner or later," he said, "I am found out." Conversation revealed the fact that he was a good "starter" but a bad "stayer." How could it be otherwise? When the energy is not stored up and conserved, a man has to live, so to speak, from hand to mouth. He has no reserves, and, whether in war or in individual life, it is the reserves which tell in the end, and give us victory or defeat.

In severe nervous breakdown, it is noticeable also that the victim's mental life has been seriously dis-

turbed. The mind is manifestly uncertain in its movements. It lacks grip. The impressions it receives are vague, and have not that definition and detail, which are the marks of mental health and power. Commonly the man will suddenly stop in the midst of a conversation or argument. The power of association, which is the law of thought, is weak, and hence the mind hesitates and flounders instead of pursuing the line of thought unerringly to the end. Cases are known to us in which clergymen, and public speakers, suddenly stop, in the middle of the argument, the mind becoming a blank, for some seconds, and then, after much confusion to speaker and hearer, the point is seized, and the discourse continues. It may be said that to lose the thread of a line of thought is not peculiar to those of the class with which we are dealing, but is common enough, especially in those of advanced age. Indeed, the same remark may be made respecting many of the mental defects incidental to nervous disorder. But, in nervous cases, these mental defects and failures are intensified and are frequently accompanied by such a sense of utter helplessness as to write fear and alarm upon the face itself.

A common symptom in nervous breakdown is the habit of what is called introspection. The cumulative effect of nerve trouble is that the vision becomes inverted and that the mind is so occupied with itself that interest in outside and natural things is almost absent. "The mere pursuit of health," says Mr.

G. K. Chesterton, "always leads to something unhealthy." Introspection is often nothing more than a blind search for mental health, and inevitably it leads the victim into that slough of the mind we call depression. Professor Bain points out that the ill-effects of depression upon the muscles are most marked. Its paralysing influence upon the imagination, upon the will, and upon all those generous impulses which keep us in touch with our fellows, is so manifest, that pity fills the heart of all those who have to do with these prisoners without hope. We think it was John Morley who said, "Emerson's landscapes are all horizons." The landscapes of the nervous wreck have no horizons. His sense of perspective has been destroyed, and, until that can be restored, neither body nor mind can regain the one thing that makes life worth living, and that is health. Quite commonly one of the victims, such as we are speaking of, will say, "I've lost interest in everybody and everything." The fact is, the only interest left him is interest in himself, for his vision has broken down, and he can no longer look out beyond the bounds of his own disorder. Occasionally, when the disease is not far advanced, he will turn to books dealing with psychology, hoping to find escape thereby. But this is to make confusion worse confounded, for, like the semi-invalids who read medical books instead of consulting the physician, he imagines that he has ills which he has not. After a fairly wide experience, we are confident that,

for the mind which is ill through nervous disorder, nothing is worse than to dabble in "isms" and "-ologies," which only add fuel to the fire, and prevent the mind from getting back to nature, with its play and song, its green fields and blue skies, its fresh air, and its wide, open spaces.

CHAPTER IV

AS HE SEES HIMSELF

In order that we may understand more fully the nature of the disorder, as it affects the mind and its atmosphere, it may be well to set out the facts as known to the writer of these pages.

The trouble we are dealing with does not come upon us suddenly. It grows upon one. For some time, it is not realised that anything unusual is happening. Over and above the general feeling of exhaustion, there are other definite ailments present, in most cases. For the first time, it may be, the victim knows the meaning of the term headache. Even this is of a kind peculiar to his special trouble. It is not so much acute pain that he experiences as pressure, fulness, or restriction. He has the feeling that his head is being pressed, as if by a weight, or by a hat which is too small for him. Commonly, the pain is at the back of the neck. Sometimes it is in the forehead, or temples. It may be continuous, but often it seems to come and go rhythmically, and at intervals, not infrequently leaving the scalp so tender as to make it painful to brush the hair.

Then, perhaps less commonly, nervous breakdown

means a most serious and distressing trouble at the lower part of the spine. It is not so much definite pain as intense weakness, and is similar to that painful weariness which ensues after sitting bolt upright for a long time. Perhaps nothing contributes more to his depressed spirits than this special weakness in the spine. The corollary to this trouble is often a restlessness which manifests itself in occasional jerkings and twitchings of the limbs.

Fortunately, these troubles come and go at certain intervals. The immediate causes are often difficult to trace. Here, as in so many other of the ailments incidental to nervous disorder, the one thing to be borne in mind is not to go beyond one's physical limitations, or, in other words, to keep well within the store of nervous energy at our disposal.

Further, in many cases of nervous breakdown there is a curious upsetting of our sleeping habits. Morning, noon, and night, the victim is on the borderland of sleep. He feels drowsy, listless, and sometimes almost overpowered with the spirit of weariness. Sometimes a paralysing calm settles upon him. His condition is something like that of the Ancient Mariner—

> "Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
> 'Twas sad as sad could be:
> And we did speak only to break
> The silence of the sea."

And yet when the proper time comes for sleep often nothing is more difficult. The most trivial things,

comparatively speaking, so irritate the mind and excite his emotions that excessive wakefulness at night is a serious trouble. A heated argument, a fit of bad temper, bad news, competitive games, in short, anything making unusual demands upon the feelings—each or any of these is a cause sufficient unduly to disturb the mind, and so to produce a state of sleeplessness.

From the foregoing, it may be seen that the physical disabilities of nervous breakdown are serious enough. Still more serious, however, are mental weaknesses which accompany them, and which to a large extent are the results of those disabilities. Perhaps loss of memory is among the first and earliest signs of nervous breakdown. And, to the fairly young and middle-aged, this is a serious handicap. In advanced age, of course, it is natural enough. When, however, the barrister or the city clerk, the author or the accountant, when these, in the heydey of their career, find their powers of recollection failing, and cannot remember important details, such as names and faces, as is often the case in nervous trouble, their alarm is natural and even wholesome. Something serious has happened.

The fact is that what has happened is easily explained. The impressions which are being made upon the mind are vague and indistinct. Owing to the abnormal state of the nerves, the mind flits from object to object, not resting sufficiently long upon anything, so as to see it in detail and

clear outline. As the good photograph is conditioned by a good exposure, so memory is conditioned by good impression, that is, by detail and definition. Memory is the power of recalling impressions. Unless the impressions we wish to recall, therefore, and which are down in the subconscious mind, are vivid and distinct, it is too much to ask of the mind to make them live again in our conscious mental life.

Intimately connected with this failure of the mind to recall past impressions is the further inevitable result of nervous trouble, lack of the power of concentration. Indeed, this is partly the reason for loss of memory, as is easily seen. It is also the cause of many other mental, not to say moral, weaknesses. When the mind cannot focus itself upon the matter in hand, it has abdicated its supreme function, for it has ceased to exercise control, the will itself being enfeebled in all such cases. Any serious attempt to concentrate the mind upon matter not particularly interesting often means, in nervous wrecks, utter confusion, the mind becoming a blank for the time being.

That lack of concentration means also indecision and vacillation is quite natural. Decision of character rests upon a proper balance of the mental faculties. It means seeing the facts, and so feeling and thinking about them as to kindle the power of will in the mind. And it is here that the mind fails in nervous disorder. It does not see things aright,

or feel or think about them aright, and hence decision and action are difficult to set in motion.

Then, we should hardly expect to find much self-confidence in the class of people we are dealing with. On the contrary, timidity is characteristic of their disorder. They dislike meeting strangers; they hesitate to cross a crowded thoroughfare; they are shy in company, until roused, and then they sometimes become noticeably bold.

Moreover, there is a constantly recurring sense of vague and indefinable fears. For hours, and sometimes days, the victim is oppressed with the feeling that something unpleasant, not to say dreadful, is going to happen. He may reason with himself as much as he will, proving, for the moment, that his fears and forebodings are groundless. Still, the cloud hangs heavily overhead. He broods and broods, shrinking more and more into himself, becoming silent and detached from those about him, until at last the cloud lifts, and without any known cause he is out in the open sunshine once more.

It is curious to note the effects of colour and sound upon those suffering from nervous disorder. To both they are, not infrequently, extremely sensitive. Quite recently, a distinguished man of fine, mental ability, but who was suffering from nervous disorder, confessed that, sitting in his garden in the evening, and hearing the sounds of church bells, coming to him from a distance, he is moved to tears. Such people often find that to attend church is most

painful. The general appeal to the feelings, in the music and the living voice, so overpower them as to make regular attendance difficult if not impossible.

When it is remembered that colour is intimately and directly associated with sound, we can easily imagine what positive effects colour must have upon the mind. As a matter of experience, we know that the soothing influences of colours, for example, are so real that we are convinced that it should be classed among the curative methods of treatment in certain kinds of nervous trouble. In all such cases, it will be found that a room in the house, arranged according to some well-thought-out colour scheme, will be a haven of refuge to such sufferers, and do much to help them during the period in which they are regaining their lost nervous and mental health.

In this connection, we might point out that darkness often has a depressing effect upon the victim of nerves. Except when retiring to rest, those suffering from nervous breakdown are happiest in the light. Sunless days, and dark, dingy rooms, these are positive irritants, and the more they live in open spaces, and in the sunlight, the more at ease they are, and the better chance they have of rising above their naturally gloomy selves.

From all this, it may be thought that those suffering from nervous disorder are very disagreeable people. At times they are. In any case, however,

they mostly have the charm of variety. You may like them or you may not, but you cannot ignore them. Moreover, whatever their qualities or defects may be, they comprise a large and growing section of the community, and, until the disabilities under which they live are removed, an enormous fund of the finest energy is being wasted and so lost to the general good.

CHAPTER V

HEREDITY AND EDUCATION

The question is often asked, what is the cause of nervous breakdown? In few, if any, cases can absolutely specific causes be assigned. Mostly there are several causes, each again having a deeper cause, and each contributing its share to the final and painful result.

Among the deeper sources of the trouble, there is undoubtedly the influence of heredity. Within what limits the influence of heredity works is not easy to determine. This involves the question of biology, the outposts of which fade away into mystery. There can be no doubt, however, that nervous breakdown in many cases can be traced to similar disorder in the parents or forefathers of the victim. Tennyson reminds us that—

> "Sometimes in a dead man's face
> To those that watch it more and more,
> A likeness hardly seen before
> Comes out to some one of his race."

It is not strange, therefore, if nerve troubles are traceable to the highly-strung temperament of the father, and especially to that of the mother. Where

there is present a neurotic taint in one's family, there it is not infrequently found that nervous breakdown is easily apt to set in. Being at first simply a tendency, under pressure or neglect it takes definite form in the trouble with which we are dealing.

It has also been pointed out, by some of the best authorities, that there is a strong predisposition to nervous disorders in the children of alcoholic parents, even when the parents have not themselves suffered from nerve troubles. Some authorities have also asserted that nervous breakdown shows itself repeatedly in those whose family history reveals no nervous ailments, but does reveal tubercular trouble on one or both sides. What seems clear, however, is that serious nervous breakdown of a definite kind is rarely inherited. We inherit tendencies, temperaments and dispositions, but not in such cases actual and defined maladies.

We strongly deprecate, therefore, the unhealthy habit, to which many are prone, of throwing responsibility upon others which really belongs to themselves. Tendencies and dispositions we may, indeed we often do, inherit; but that is a different matter from assenting to the easy-going philosophy that a man's destiny is in other hands than his own. All too frequently it happens that those suffering from nerve trouble are apt to think that they are as they were born, and so they fail to make that mental and moral protest which is of first importance in all cases of nervous breakdown. We hold that a

disciplined mind, and a trained and rightly directed will, can do much to correct each and all of our inherited tendencies. We can do and be all that we ought to do and be. The power within the mind is ultimately equal to all the demands of a healthy, normal, vigorous life.

Further, among those who have given much attention to the subject, there is a consensus of opinion that nervous breakdown is often, to some extent, traceable to certain serious defects in modern school methods. Both in our Elementary and Public Schools, seeds have been sown which, in later years, under strain or pressure, have issued in nervous disorders. For several years the writer, as a manager of a group of Elementary Schools, had special opportunities for inside observation. Whilst nothing but praise is due to the work being done in many of these schools, one could not help feeling that, with all the best will in the world, the teacher is often the victim of a system, against which it is hard to contend.

Unfortunately the old vicious idea as to the nature of education persists in many schools. Instead of regarding education as development and discipline and the power of application, there still exists the notion that the mind is a kind of chest into which as much as possible has to be packed in so many years. The inevitable result is cramming.

Cramming leads to this further evil; it means little or no actual thinking. The mind is so completely

taken up with storing within itself the thoughts of other minds that it has no energy left for making any thought-life of its very own. There is an old saying that to think is to live. It is truer than we commonly suppose. Thinking is not only the condition of mental life but of nervous life as well. Educational methods, therefore, which make it difficult to think are condemned already, and no condemnation is sterner than that which expresses itself in low nervous vitality.

Experience goes to prove, also, that life-long harm is not infrequently done by the harsh treatment to which children are sometimes subjected. Often, the teacher is himself or herself highly strung, as the result of years of strain in the difficult art of teaching. The result is lack of patience and harsh treatment of those in their care.

Happily corporal punishment in our schools is largely a thing of the past. Still, methods of punishment continue which, in the case of certain types of children, are most harmful. In each and every case, any attempt to correct lapses or bad habits or indolence should have a real relation to the faults or follies of the child. To deal with the delinquent in such a way as to leave a sense of injustice or unwisdom is to do violence to the child's temperament and to leave in the mind positive centres of anger and irritation.

Lack of sympathy with, or tactless handling of young minds, in the most formative period of their

lives—these are too commonly contributary causes of those distressing nervous disorders which manifest themselves in later life. Then, as to over-pressure, we are convinced that it exists to a larger extent than is realised. Apart altogether from the evils associated with examinations, inspections, reports, and other methods of "speeding up," there is a daily pressure which many children cannot escape. In the case of the sensitive child, we have met cases in which there has been actual fear and dread of schools for days, if not weeks, together. Often, without intending it, the child is made to feel small by comparison, or is openly blamed; indeed, it is sometimes held up to ridicule. Imagine the strain involved in an experience like that. And, to make matters worse, such a child sometimes lacks that sympathy and understanding at home which it has a right to expect. Day by day the child has to face a situation which taxes both mind and nerves beyond its strength. It loses hope and confidence, and comes to look on school and education as evils to be escaped, and not as pleasant means to great ends.

Happily the old ideas respecting home-work are being revised in many quarters. We cannot but think that the less the schoolroom is extended to the home the better. If home-work has to be done, it should especially appeal to the child's interest, beguiling the mind rather than imposing upon it fresh duties and tasks. Speaking before the British Association some years ago, Dr. Dyke Acland demon-

strated "that the handwriting of school-boys deteriorated in proportion as they were deprived of sleep, and improved on their being allowed more time for it." When a child's sleep is cut down or disfigured by nervous starts or dreams resulting from school or home-work, irreparable harm is done, and a harvest is being sown which must be reaped sooner or later, and not infrequently later.

In this connection a word may be said about fear. The fears of childhood are rarely forgotten. "Every ugly thing told to a child, every shock, every fright given him, will remain like splinters in the flesh to torture him all his life long." Many a child has been injured, nervously and mentally, beyond repair by frights caused by tales of the "bogie-man," ogres, hobgoblins, witches, and so on. Most children are fearful in the dark. Instead of ministering to that fear everything should be done to correct it. It is a wicked thing to play upon it and to make it a source of amusement. In so doing, violence of such a nature is committed as can never be undone, and which may mean a permanent handicap in years to come.

One other word should be said both to parents and teachers. It is this, that one of their first duties is to teach the child self-control. This means that the child's emotional life should not be left to shape itself. Usually the feelings of the child are apt to be intense, and even violent.

The whole question of control is that of repres-

sion and expression. As to the latter, this is not within our present purview. What concerns our immediate attention is the repressive side of the problem. What is needed is persistent and kindly treatment of the young mind, during that period when the emotions are primitive, so that undue waste of nervous energy does not take place. Whether it be joy or delight, fear or pain, hunger or want, these feelings should not be allowed to carry the mind away, but by discipline and kindness should be kept within the bounds of reason and common sense. In this way, we are convinced, they may often be saved from those nervous disorders which lie in wait for most of us in later years.

CHAPTER VI

FATIGUE

In dealing with the general causes of nervous breakdown, the question of fatigue at once emerges. It may be said that fatigue is a result rather than a cause. Up to a certain point fatigue is simply the result of that normal wear and tear to which the body, like all machines, is subject. It is Nature uttering its warning against over-pressure. It is the reaction which follows action, and is, therefore, in accordance with the laws of Nature. As long as it is not beyond the renewing forces of the body no harm is done. All life, during the twenty-four hours of each day, manifests itself in a rhythmic process, and fatigue is just the backward swing of the pendulum of existence.

But now, the moment fatigue passes into the danger zone of exhaustion, that moment serious trouble may begin, and breakdown becomes possible.

A famous nerve specialist once told the writer that almost the first lesson the victim of nerves has to learn is how to keep within his limitations. In every life, especially in those which we call "highly strung," there is a fatigue limit beyond which it is

dangerous to go. One has to find out that limit; and then keep strictly within it. Histologists tell us that the nuclei of the nerve cells shrink as much as fifty per cent. in extreme fatigue. As to how this waste is to be repaired will be dealt with later; our present concern is to drive home the facts, of which the vast majority of us seem ignorant.

It is when we look at individuals, however, that we realise how common this nerve wastage is. Who does not know the man or the woman who falsely imagines that a long week-end walk, a "day's spin" on the cycle, or "a day on the links," is just what they need occasionally? We do not say that such forms and feats of exercise are always harmful, but we do say that, for those unaccustomed to such severe tests of nerve and muscle, they may be nothing better than serious forms of riotous living.

When one looks closely into the very frequent cases of nervous collapse in the lives of clergymen, politicians, lawyers, heads of business concerns, and others, in most cases the cause is the same, almost total disregard of the economy of the nerve forces. These men know that in ordinary affairs expenditure must be regulated, directed, and wisely economised. In the case of their own health, however, they are commonly among the most ignorant and the most blind.

The pertinence of these remarks is better realised when we understand what fatigue is. It may be regarded chemically and microscopically. When so

regarded it turns out to be a kind of blood poisoning.

Some years ago, a remarkable experiment was conducted on the following lines: A dog, tired and "dead beat," was killed. It's blood was at once injected into the veins of a vigorous living dog. Almost immediately the living dog showed all the fatigue signs of its dead brother. In confirmation of this, Professor D. Fraser Harris says, in his little book on Nerves, "muscular fatigue objectively, on its chemical side, consists of certain soluble substances which, entering the circulation, depress activities after the manner of soluble poisons."

There existed a prevalent idea at one time that toil was a curse imposed upon one class, and that fatigue and exhaustion were confined almost entirely to what were called the working classes. But the working classes really include all classes who wisely expend either muscular or nerve energy. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the most tired people are the brain workers. Brain sweat is as real and as exhausting as that which follows the most exacting toil at the anvil.

The key to the problem of fatigue then is control. Without persistent and consistent control, the nervous system is bound to suffer serious wastage, with the result that fatigue, or functional inability, will continue to be more or less a serious factor in most nerve troubles.

The nerves are to a great extent under the control

of the will. It is important, therefore, that those suffering from nervous breakdown should strive early to control their emotions: for it is through the gate of the emotions that so much of our energy escapes. Fear, anger, sympathy and grief, each and all of these, for example, if allowed to dominate the mind, work serious mischief in the nervous system.

Professor Elmer Gates, of the United States Commission of Biological Research, has shown by chemical tests that the human tissues and fluids are affected by the emotions. He found that the blood of a large number of people, after attacks of ill-temper, responds uniformly to a certain chemical test; of others, after grief, to another; and so on through the line of emotional experiences. In each and every such test it was proved that the result of any malevolent or inharmonious disturbance of the mind means acid, acrid, or poisonous matter in the nervous tissue itself.

Of course, it is not here contended that we are to suppress all healthy feeling. It is the suppression of unrestrained anger, jealousy and the like, that should be carefully attended to. Quite commonly, the way to kill emotion or feeling is to refuse to give it expression. For example, if when we are annoyed, we can "keep smiling," we check the tendency to knit the brows, and to quicken the heart beat, and so can prevent an explosion of anger. "Inhibition of the expression inevitably means the death of the

emotion." On the other hand, harm may be done as well as good in checking expression. Sympathy felt but not expressed soon passes into indifference. Even love cannot live long without expression, and spurious religion is the natural result of failure to express itself in deed and conduct. Relief or expression then has its place. There is a lot to be said for "having a good cry" or "having it out" with a fellow. To bottle up one's natural and healthy emotions means nervous strain, since such conduct blocks up the nerve currents, and so means emotional explosion, and inevitable nerve fatigue.

In a recent article on English Phlegm, an Irish writer remarked: "When I hear an English crowd hip, hip hurraying, without any outward sign of emotion, I feel a homesickness for the great Celtic roar that seems to rend the heaven with its intensity. The Irish cheer may signify nothing in particular, but it is a mighty relief for an excited Celt, chilled by English phlegm." Well, there's something to be said for this despised English phlegm after all. At least, it is less fatiguing than the "Celtic roar." Nothing is more important for that class of people with whom we are dealing, than that they should practice and acquire, as soon as possible, the art of emotional control. The emotions of love, pity, sympathy and religion are each and all, in their due proportion, excellent elements in the structure of character. But they lose much of their virtue and power if they are not controlled by judgment, and

if they make undue demands upon our nerve resources.

It may be said that lack of control or lack of will-power is precisely one of the weaknesses to which the class we are dealing with is prone. It is often the case. Undoubtedly, the will is affected by serious nerve troubles. But it is astonishing what potential forces of control reside in the mind. And these forces can be called upon successfully if we attempt to do so on right lines. Habit can do much.

We shall deal later with the question as to how we may repair the waste places in the mind resulting from excessive fatigue. For the moment we suggest, to those suffering from nerves, a few habits and hints which the writer has himself proved most helpful.

First.—Strive to acquire the habit of restraint in speech. Remember that, in nervous troubles especially, silence is golden, speech is silvern. There is a time to talk and a time not to talk. Commonly highly-strung people talk voluminously. Often, when they are not bores, they talk well and convincingly, but it is a price which they, did they but know it, cannot afford. The habit of restraint here lessens fatigue and economises the nerve forces.

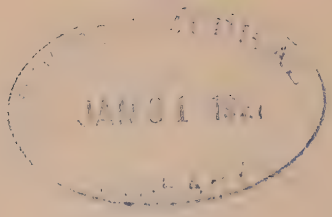
Second.—Avoid the habit of argument, to which people of this class are often addicted. It is a curious phenomenon that the spirit of contention and intolerance quite commonly accompanies nervous breakdown. The tendency towards disputation is

a form of mental touchiness. It is often nothing more than nervous resentment of ideas which clash with our own. Inevitably, it creates irritability, and rouses the spirit of opposition for opposition's sake. This tendency should be resolutely checked, especially at night, and immediately before retiring to rest, as not infrequently it means wakefulness and serious loss of sleep.

Third.—Don't "stand about" more than is necessary. Much fatigue is due to thoughtlessness. The man suffering from nervous breakdown is usually restless, and he is apt to indulge in movement for movement's sake. Rest whenever it is possible. Don't stand or loll about when a seat is at hand. Walking is good within limits, but don't take "long" walks. In any case, when walking, do it with a will, and don't saunter along listlessly and aimlessly.

Fourth.—Keep a tight rein upon your sympathies. It is a wholesome thing to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep. But such catholicity of emotion exacts its own price. The danger is that the heart in such cases is liable to become the sport of any passing appeal, exhaustion, more or less, being an inevitable result. The play, the sermon, pity, sorrow, music, and company, each makes its appeal, and often not singly, making a larger demand upon the feelings than the nervous system warrants. Do not crush your sympathies; on the other hand, do not respond without measure and without stint.

Ultimately, the whole question of fatigue rests upon knowing and understanding oneself, and adapting oneself wisely to his own particular environment. To avoid extremes, to keep within one's limitations, in short, to be moderate in all things; along such lines fatigue may be kept on the right side of the danger line of exhaustion, and the nervous system need not be strained beyond easy repair.



CHAPTER VII

NERVE STRAIN

Intimately connected with fatigue is the question of strain, which not infrequently is the source of fatigue and nervous exhaustion.

The law of strain is the law upon which the engineer bases his calculations. The girder, the span, the spring, and the piston-rod, each is designed according to this law, and to do the special work which lies within its strain limitations. In each case, the elasticity of the material must be maintained, or its power and usefulness are gone. The law of strain is operative also in the nervous system. Here, also, it is of paramount importance not to destroy the elasticity of the nervous tissue. When this is done the law of strain has been violated and nervous breakdown ensues.

Nerve strain is a broad term. It will assist us, in our search for causes, if we examine it under three heads: (1) Intellectual strain; (2) Moral strain; and (3) Social strain.

(1) As to the nature of intellectual strain, we all know, more or less, what it means. Those who have made this subject their special study agree that,

whilst brain work is essential, if the mind is to be kept strong and active, it may be, and often is, overworked. When that happens, nerve troubles are very apt to follow, for the brain itself is the chief centre of the nervous system. In speaking of brain strain, we are thinking of that special kind of strain which is involved in an excess of intellectual exertion. We are thinking of teachers, professors, scientists, literary men and students generally, and all those who work for degrees and distinctions. In all these cases, where excessive mental toil is demanded, cerebral depression, and frequently brain excitement, are states commonly experienced.

Generally, the kind of nervous troubles which arise from excessive mental toil are neither persistent nor serious. It is comparatively easy, with few exceptions, to repair strain of this kind. Rest, fresh air, and rational physical treatment, which includes plenty of sleep, are usually sufficient to restore the mind's elasticity and strength.

(2) Moral strain is quite another matter. It is to this special kind of strain that so many fall victims. And it is not suprprising when we remember what a vast territory moral strain embraces. It is difficult to realize what multitudes of men and women there are, at this moment, who are under the hard pressure of ambition, necessity and failure. And pressure of this order is not likely to become less, however much reconstruction schemes may eventually ease the strain of our social existence.

Ambition is a good and necessary driving force, provided its aims are not degradingly selfish. In any case, ambition tends to strain, since it means love of place and distinction. It means tenacity, perseverance, endurance and will-power. It means, in short, the concentrating of the powers of the mind along clearly defined lines, and towards definite ends. But along the road of ambition there are many fears and anxieties, and sometimes rivalries and jealousies.

Now, it is precisely on the emotional side of the ambitious life that trouble lurks and nervous breakdown enters. It is not so much the brain toil involved in the pursuit of ambition that spells disaster, but the heavy demands made upon the emotional life.

It is not excessive brain toil that does the mischief, but the enslavement of the mind by the emotion of fear. As hope revives and repairs, so fear depresses and destroys, and there is no part of man's life more liable to breakdown, under the pressure of a tyrant emotion like fear, than that most delicate department which we call the nervous system.

In most business concerns, there is always present the risk element. The wise man will seek to conduct his business, as far as possible, on sure and certain foundations. In any case, risks must be taken, and as long as these are based upon experience and foresight they ought to be taken.

"He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all."

The man who takes no risks will take few of the best things of life. Still, there are risks which some should take, and which others dare not take. Generally speaking, it is the man of cool temperament who may take the most serious risks. When the temperament is warm and impulse is quick, serious risk is bound to play havoc with the emotions. For such, the safe road is the wisest.

Further, apart from the special strain attending business or professional life, there is a vast field in some part of which all of us meet Dame Fortune in one or other of her moods. There's loss of money, poverty, grief, disappointment, infidelity, disloyalty, and the rest. In such experiences, strain is involved. These mean wear and tear of the mind. They make heavy demands upon one's stock of nervous energy. In most cases, unless we resist we are lost, and the resistance sometimes required is so stern that we come near to the point when resistance is no longer possible, and when the mind's elasticity is gone. This is the opportunity of nervous trouble.

In some cases, the nervous system is undermined owing to years of failure or because the fight against odds is too unequal. The odds may take the shape of hereditary weakness, or it may consist in an uncongenial environment, or a life-long struggle for

the welfare of others. It is hard to know that suffering and endurance may in themselves contain the possibility of good. There may be heroism without much hope. Real heroism may exist in the humblest home or in the small business, or the poorly paid profession.

When a tired woman is eating her heart out to make two ends meet, or when a man labours from morn till night thinking of a wife who must not know want, and of boys who must be educated and have their chance, these are the little tragedies which commonly end in the serious disabilities with which we are dealing. When they end thus, despair takes the place of hope, and life becomes one long sunless day.

There are never lacking preachers who tell us not to worry. But worry is the natural consequence where life is lived on or beyond the danger line of strain. It is due mostly to the fears and spectres of the mind. Yet, the highly-strung man or woman will do well to fight worry to the death. Usually it is easier to fight than we imagine, because it frequently, though not always, rests upon no sufficient grounds. It is not work but worry that kills, we all admit. Worry and rust are the two foes of the mind, and it is as we protect the mind from the ghosts of fear and anxiety on the one hand, and keep it moderately and healthily occupied on the other, that our nerve forces are conserved, and we

pass our days on the sunny side of life's difficult road.

Probably a harvest of evil has yet to be reaped as a result of the strain which has been the inevitable accompaniment of the great war. A French physician has recently declared that a large percentage of the young womanhood of enemy-invaded countries have lost the power of motherhood, owing to the nervous shocks to which they have been exposed. More than ever before, the need for careful study of nerve troubles has presented itself, and, amid the many problems for which the new times will demand a solution, none will be more important or more pressing than the problem of how to repair the ravages of excessive nervous strain.

A further most serious result of the great European conflict is an almost new complaint from which thousands of our soldiers have suffered. Shell-shock may not be different in kind from the nerve troubles we are dealing with, but it is different in its origin and intensity. We have seen many of these cases. The signs are unmistakable. Trembling, depression, sleeplessness, exhaustion, loss of memory and the power of concentration, these are the inevitable marks of strain, and strain which has been almost beyond endurance, and which has made strong men weak as children, unfitting them for the ordinary duties of life. It is pathetic to note how fearful are many who suffer from shell-shock lest their shattered nerves may be beyond repair. In most cases, there

are grounds for hope and confidence. Let all such ponder carefully the later chapters in this little work, and put into practice the hints there given, and beyond all doubt the waste places in their nervous system will be repaired, and life once more become worth living.

(3) Finally, a word must be said on Social Strain. Many are the victims who sacrifice their nerve forces upon the altar of amusement and pleasure. Social enjoyment and all the attending excitements and gaieties of parties, dances, dinners, plays, race meetings and betting odds; it is in these ways that so many in these days sap and undermine their nervous capital. It may be said that life in these days makes such demands upon the bodies and minds of men and women that change and excitement are simple necessities. But it is the kinds of excitement to which we demur. Moreover, the class which are the victims of these excitements are usually not the brain and hand toilers of the land, but the more or less leisured class. It is the "smart set," the well-to-do, the people who have more money than is good for them; it is these people who pass so many of their days in a whirl of excitement, and who form a large part of the nervous wrecks of the community.

It is said that none are more busy than those who do nothing in particular. Those who go out much, and whose time is taken up with the duties and cares of conventionality and custom, do nothing really

worth while, but the nervous expenditure involved is serious. This applies especially to women. Those everlasting calls, visits, "little dinners," and play-going; it is these habits which work the mischief. For, in most cases, such a life means too long or too copious meals in vitiated atmospheres, along with late hours, insufficiency of sleep and general nervous strain.

One of the pressing needs of the time, therefore, is a re-discovery of pleasure and relaxation. To-day many of our forms of pleasure have become divorced from healthy sport, art, and literature, and the quiet ways of Nature. To enjoy oneself nowadays means to have lots of money, and to spend it without thought. The simple pleasures are despised. Those pleasures are most sought after which cost most. And the pity of it is that instead of being stiffened and braced by these pleasures and luxuries, we find in our midst an increasing number of weaklings, whose nerves are always on edge, and who cannot do their fair share of the rough work of a busy world. Amusement by all means. Relaxation and a draught of the elixir of enjoyment, most certainly. But nerve-racking excitement and pleasures that impair rather than brace the mind, these must be shunned, if the faculties of the mind are to be strong, and nervous disabilities are not to handicap us in the race of life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CALL OF NATURE

NATURE herself is a living protest against nervous disorder. It is found only in the life of man. He alone has the power to become unnatural, and to upset the balance and rhythm which are characteristic of the natural world. Nervous troubles are, for the most part, coincident with town and city life. Civilisation, so-called, finds its highest expression in large communities. It tends to develop certain sides of man's life at the expense of others. It makes demands upon our nervous and mental resources, such as are never found except in the artificial conditions of a highly civilised life. It is arguable that Nature is careless of the individual whilst she is careful of the species, or the race. The struggle for the "survival of the fittest" may be one of Nature's primary laws. Still, there is a wonderful absence of stain in Nature, as far as we can see. Bird, flower, and beast may find life hard at times. Many perish, doubtless, in the great struggle for existence. In the sea, the woods, and forests, there seems to be a great waste of life. But, in spite of all this, the individual flower shows no sign of stress: its bloom

is as lovely as ever, and its scent is as sweet as of old. The bird, whatever its struggles may be, sings its song, and enjoys its life, and the beast performs its functions and passes its days without being conscious of the struggle for existence.

Nothing is more remarkable in Nature than the absence in all living things, save man, of anxiety and fear for to-morrow. Here, to-day is everything. No moment in Time is more important to the ant, the rose or the tree, than this moment. Life, here and now, is all sufficient, and consists in being, in growing and in dying; and even dying is as good and natural as being. Each period of life, in short, is as eventful and as beautiful as the other.

It is impossible to be sad and introspective for long in natural conditions. The dark, brooding spirit of the nervous wreck finds no echo in external things. The sombre theories and philosophies of life come mostly from the crowded haunts of men, not from the quiet solitudes of the valleys and the hills. It is significant that the sweetest and noblest conceptions of human life have been put into poetry by the great poet-philosopher Wordsworth, whose life was spent amid the mountains and lakes of Westmorland. He saw the beauty and the wonder of the world as few did, and he saw it all because he kept close to Nature and knew Her in the very recesses of Her being.

One of the saddest things about the strain which life imposes upon so many of us, is the fact that we

have so little sight to bring to the beauty of the world. We lack vision, and in nervous disorder it is almost wholly absent, and hence the best of life is being missed, because the mind is confined within too narrow limits. Back to Nature, then, is the cure for all those whose nerves are shattered and whose vision has become inverted. Nature, at least, does not worry. She, at any rate, is never over-anxious or cast down. She, we are certain, is somewhere near the secret source of serenity and calm and proportion. And last, but not least, she knows how to play and how to rest.

Some one has said holiday-making is a lost art. Certainly it is not as simple as it seems. To be wisely and healthily idle is a great achievement, and our greatest teacher in this fine art is Nature. Writing to a friend, who was a somewhat restless being, Hamerton remarks, "You have learned many things, my Friend, but one thing you have not learned, the art of resting." There is nothing which the nervous wreck needs to learn more, and as quickly as possible.

"Le temps le mieux employé, est celui que l'on perd"—the best employed time is that which we lose, said a far-seeing French writer. It is something to improve ourselves; it is a greater thing to allow Nature to improve us. It is a necessary thing to be active, never more so than in these days; but to know how to be inactive is no less important. Here, again, Nature is our teacher. There is a fulness and rich-

ness, yes, even a prodigality about the beauty of Nature which would seem to point to the fact that she revels in delight. As Henley puts it—

> "These glad, these great, these goodly days,
> Bewildering hope, outrunning praise,
> The Earth, renewed by the great sun's longing,
> Utters her joys in a million ways."

Health is contagious, as disease is. What the disordered mind needs first and last is to catch the spirit of health, as it breathes in the gardens and fields, in the hills and woods, and in the dew and the sunshine, which are never far from any one of us. There is present in the material world, in spite of the reign of law, a kindly healing, restoring principle. The broken branch, the crushed flower, the wounded animal, in each and every case Nature hastens to bind up and heal. She hates scars and weaknesses and, in a thousand ways, is ever busy curing the ills and diseases which find their way into her domain. She is equally considerate of men's minds and nerves. She can minister to minds diseased. From the earth we come and to the earth we return, and the passage of our lives, between the coming and the going, can be happy and purposeful only as we keep near to the centre and source of life. The basis of all life, whether it be material, intellectual or moral, has Nature for its corner stone, and it is vain to attempt to erect the structure of existence, ignoring this fundamental fact. It is true that the mental, moral,

and spiritual factors are of supreme importance, but the scaffolding by means of which these are erected is that elemental part in us which is most closely allied to Nature. First things must come first, and if these are forgotten or abused no life can realise fully those immaterial elements which are potential in each and all of us.

CHAPTER IX

REST AND RELAXATION

In the foregoing chapters we have dealt, in a more or less general way, with the nature and causes of nervous breakdown. In succeeding pages, we shall endeavour to deal practically with remedies.

From what has been said respecting the nature of nervous exhaustion and its attending ills, it is at once evident that rest is almost the first condition of recovery and repair. Rest, however, is relative. The nearest approach to absolute rest is perhaps found in sleep. But there are other forms and degrees of rest which demand serious consideration, and which may do much to restore the shattered nervous system. Indeed, sleep itself is partly dependent upon these, if it is to do its appointed work.

It must not be forgotten that rest is not idleness. The first need of those in bondage to nervous exhaustion is to be agreebly employed. In this way the mind escapes from itself. Thus it is that the necessary fatigue is produced which is the forerunner of sleep, Nature's chief restorative for jaded minds. There are other and minor forms of rest,

however,—rest which the mind is constantly in need of during our waking hours.

(1) Of these lesser forms of rest perhaps relaxation is one of the chief. We commonly speak of "taking a little relaxation." Usually this means a somewhat vague and indefinable thing. It ought to mean a very definite thing. To relax oneself is almost an art, and one which those suffering from nerve troubles would do well to acquire as early as possible.

But what is relaxation? The simple meaning of the word is illuminating; it means, to make less tense or rigid. Now, it is precisely this tenseness and rigidity of feeling to which most highly-strung people are subject. In such temperaments, the bow is rarely slackened. It is this tense, contracted state of mind which is characteristic of nerve troubles, that must be corrected if relief is to be found and the mind is to be at ease. The trouble, in such cases, is that the relation between thought and feeling has been upset. The emotions dominate the situation. The feelings, as a result of nervous derangement, block up the currents of the mind. Like water in a narrow-necked bottle, they escape with difficulty, and escape they must if the mind is to regain its balance and repose.

The art of relaxation on its mental side, therefore, is the art of finding means of escape for our bottled-up emotions. And this can be done by giving vent to our feelings in some healthy and positive

way. For example, if we are not naturally feeling cheerful we should, as Professor James says, "sit up cheerfully, look around cheerfully, and act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there." In this way an outlet is given for our sadness; we supplant the evil by bringing in the good.

Robert Louis Stevenson speaks of the virtue of coming down to breakfast with "morning faces." As a rule, the "morning face" of the people with whom we are dealing is anything but cheerful. To find rest from that morning gloom, which is all too common, relaxation is the remedy. We may let it escape by opening the mind to bright thoughts and generous feelings. This is one of the best ways of resting the mind and bringing refreshment to tired nerves.

The value of relaxation as a form of rest is also seen in relation to bodily fatigue, which is so intimately connected with nerve weariness. Beyond all doubt, the emotional disturbance which accompanies nerve trouble acts directly upon the body and its movements. Where the feelings are tuned to their highest pitch, the nerves become tense and the muscles become contracted. The remedy may be found in relaxation. This is recognised in army and other kinds of drill, in which "stand at ease" is as impotrant as "eyes front," "form fours," and so on. It is most important, therefore, that generally the power of relaxation should be acquired.

On this point Professor James says: "If you

never give yourself up to the chair, but always keep your leg-and-body muscles half contracted for a rise; if you breathe eighteen or nineteen instead of sixteen times a minute, and never quite breathe out at that—what mental mood can you be in but one of inner panting and expectancy, and how can the future and its worries possibly forsake your mind? On the other hand, how can they gain admission to your mind if your brow be unruffled, your respiration calm and complete, and your muscles all relaxed?" That is to say, we must "let ourselves go" in a healthy way. Body and mind must be regularly unstrung. To live with our emotions perpetually on the stretch, and our minds always on the alert, is not to live, but uselessly to waste the very fibre of our nervous being. To practise and habituate oneself to intervals of relaxation is one of the most economical and restoring forms of rest. Until this art has been acquired, all those suffering from nervous troubles are squandering their nervous energies at a faster rate than Nature can replenish them, and sooner or later nervous breakdown is likely to follow.

(2) Perhaps one of the highest forms of relaxation is religion. Certainly many find it to be so. By this means our deepest emotions find restful expression. Disappointment, failure, sorrow, fear, grief and pain, each and all of these find a quiet outlet in the consolations of Faith and Trust. The trouble with most of those afflicted with nervous ail-

ments is that they have lost the sense of values. Small things assume threatening proportions. The passing moment takes on the guise of the permanent, and life's difficulties and responsibilities loom larger than they really are. What is called Faith enters the mind as a moral laxative. It keeps emotion alive and, at the same time, turns it into deep channels. And so mind and heart are one, and repose becomes the atmosphere of the soul.

(3) Amusement is another form of relaxation which is of first importance in nervous troubles. The word itself carries the idea of relaxation. It means to divert; to occupy the mind lightly and agreeably. All real play is a loosening of the faculties of the mind or a relaxing of the muscles of the body, or both. It may take the form of reading, singing, playing a musical instrument, sketching or painting, or any one of the scores of indoor or outdoor games. It may also take some social form such as a game of cards, good company, the play, and so on. But, in any case, amusement is what the mind needs, especially the mind which is stressed by nervous exhaustion. In one or more of these ways it is necessary that our mental and emotional life should find easy and pleasant occupation.

Generally to shrink into oneself, to live apart from our fellows, and to give in to our moods, is but to minister to the ills we would cure. By any and every legitimate means relaxation, bodily and mental, must be cultivated if the nervous forces are to

be conserved and renewed. We recall a case of a victim to nerves who retired to a quiet country district in order to repair his shattered nerves. Quietness and solitude, along with bracing air and rest, it was thought, was the treatment required. The programme was good, with the exception of one item. The solitude threw him too much in upon himself. He found himself cut off from the activities and social circles to which he had been accustomed most of his life. The result was disappointing, and a return more or less to the old scenes was advised and adopted. It was found in this case that the ideal seems to be to live near the centre of things, to be in daily touch with human movements and interests, and yet not to be submerged in them. For many these conditions may not be possible, but, as far as possible, these are the conditions which seem essential for the special class of people with whom we are dealing in these pages.

(4) Further, the question of holidays, in this connection, is important. Holidays should be an opportunity for amusement, of course. But they should be more than that. Above all things, the element of change is the secret of the restful holiday. Change of air and change of scene are vital for the recreation of one's mental and nervous forces. Often, the need is not an extended holiday, but brief intervals of change, at needful times. It is "the stitch in time" that is important, and that often arrests trouble at its source. Few of us real-

ise that, with excessive fatigue, unconscious disorganisation takes place. Under pressure, the highly strung man and woman trudge on when they should give in, until low vitality sets in, and breakdown is at the threshold.

Commonly, such people take life too seriously. They are disposed to regard themselves as indispensable, and consequently hold on regardless of their limited nervous resources. The simple hard fact is that no man is indispensable, and where a man approaches to that rare standard it is precisely there that an occasional and brief holiday is required, if serious trouble is to be avoided.

(5) Then, there is what may be called the rest interval, or the pause. A little thought will show us that the pause is one of Nature's most important economising devices. Day and night, work and sleep, spring and winter are natural modes of action and reaction. The pause is present in all these activities, and it seems to be one of Nature's ways of replenishing her spent forces.

The same principle seems to be at work in man's mental and nervous life, and the same demand is made for the pause or rest interval. We have our high tides of thought and emotion, as we have our low tides. Consciously, or unconsciously, rest pauses take place, and thus nerves and mind are renewed from day to day, and life pursues its uneven way. The pause, or rest interval, should be culti-

vated therefore, especially by those who are more or less prone to nerve trouble.

The usefulness of the pause as a means of rest may be illustrated in the case of the pulpit or platform speaker. Where excessive fatigue follows the pulpit or platform effort, as it frequently does, it is commonly due to the habit of rapid speaking, to which so many speakers fall victims. To speak rapidly, under the stress of strong emotion inevitably means few, if any, pauses. The result is improper breathing. The long sentence has much to answer for in cases of nervous troubles among public speakers. It not only impairs the effectiveness of the speech, but it tends to break down the speaker's nerve forces. It is therefore important that the public speaker should early acquire the pause habit. As in singing, so in speaking, the art of phrasing, which is really the art of making short pauses, is one of the first rules to be obeyed. It means effectiveness, as well as economy in one's nervous energy.

The rest interval has been dealt with in a very interesting and practical way recently in Charles S. Myers' pamphlet on "Present-day Applications of Psychology." Speaking of industrial fatigue, he points out that accidents are fewest during the first hours of the morning, and after the dinner hour, and that they are most numerous towards the end of the morning or of the afternoon. Here we see the good immediate effects of what we call the rest

interval. Clearly it is when the nervous forces are most strained that accidents in our mills and factories occur.

The same authority makes the general statement, "There can be no doubt that an unbroken morning or afternoon's work of four or more hours is economically unsound, and that the systematic introduction of rest pauses must lead to a vast improvement in quality and quantity of work." Ultimately, among other considerations, this means that to economise one's nervous forces the rest interval or pause is of first importance.

(6) Again, it is this very law, the law of rest interval, which underlies the Jewish law of the Sabbath. The seventh day, or a rest day, finds its sanction not merely in man's religious needs. It is written also in his nervous system. To keep the Sabbath day holy has a tremendously practical significance over and above any religious content involved in the command. The root meaning of holiness is wholeness or haleness. So that, whatever else the seventh day of rest should mean or not mean, it does imply the use of a day's rest from stress and strain in order that the wholeness or healthiness of the body, and especially of the nervous system, should be invigorated and maintained.

To convert this weekly interval into a day of unredeemed excitement, whether it be sport, travel, or amusement, is to do oneself disservice, and unduly to use up those nerve forces, much of which

should either be economised or directed into more healthful channels. Certainly, for those to whom these pages are specially addressed, the seventh day of rest, rightly interpreted and used, claims a first place. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." That is the old command. For none is obedience to it more imperative than for those living in the shadowland of nervous troubles.

CHAPTER X

REST AND SLEEP

THERE is an old French saying, "Qui dort dîne"—who sleeps dines. It is largely true. Sleep does not take a second place even to food. It has been demonstrated that a sleepless animal, at the end of three or four days, is as miserable as a starved one at the end of ten to fifteen. Indeed, sleep may be a substitute for food. In Leipsic and other German towns, during the war, the children were put to bed as early as 4 p.m. and kept there until 10 a.m. This was done in order to compensate their little bodies for the shortage of fuel foods to which they were subjected under war conditions.

But sleep is of immeasurable importance because it is the most perfect form of rest. All other forms of rest, good and necessary as they are in their proper place and time, are of little avail without sleep, which is fundamentally the builder and repairer of the nervous system. During our waking hours, increasing demands are being made upon the nerve forces. Endless impressions crowd in upon the mind by means of our senses. In sleep, these avenues are largely if not wholly closed, and so the

mind's activities are reduced to a minimum. Sleep, therefore, is the nearest approach we have to absolute rest.

Now, the difficulty in dealing with nervous breakdown is that sleep is often so hard to get. In such cases, sleep has to be courted and enticed. In the daytime, drowsiness is often present, whilst at night a strange and persistent wakefulness prevails. It is vital therefore that we should know something about the laws of sleep, and that we should acquaint ourselves with any and every legitimate means of inducing it.

Of course, we cannot lay down exact rules. Often sleep is so capricious and its absence is so inexplicable that it defies all our rules and all our arts. It is conditioned not only by the physical laws of the body and the nervous system, but also by the workings of that mysterious and unknown factor in us which we call the soul or the spirit. It was probably the realisation of this mysterious side of sleep which prompted the lines in "King Henry IV."—

> "Sleep, O! gentle sleep
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
> And steep my senses in oblivion?"

Still, experience has taught us much. By personal observation and common sense much may be done to cope with the evil of sleeplessness.

It will help us if we consider briefly the question,

What is sleep? A complete answer to this question implies a technical knowledge, the discussion of which is out of place here. It is sufficient to say that sleep is ultimately due to the temporary breaking of certain connections in the brain cells. Further than this it is unnecessary to go. The conditions, however, under which sleep supervenes are comparatively well known. They are the following: fatigue, diminished blood pressure on the brain, and a cessation of mental activity.

(1) Fatigue, as we have already seen, means certain toxins or poisonous substances in the blood. These sleep-inducing toxins are created during our active and conscious hours. As some one has said, "we suffocate our cells with the ashes of our waking fires." The first condition necessary to sleep, therefore, is a healthy measure of fatigue. Now, it may be said that, in the case of nervous troubles, fatigue is the normal condition. But, even so, the writer has found that there are certain mild forms of fatigue which are distinctly helpful. A short walk, a quiet unexciting game of cards, an hour's reading in which the thought rather than the emotions are engaged, in these and other ways help has been found and the necessary fatigue produced.

A pleasant and somewhat effective method of enticing sleep, through gentle fatigue, is that of reading aloud, the last thing at night, poems like Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha," or Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott." If read in monotone with dis-

tinct but quiet enunciation, the rhythm of such poetry has a soothing effect upon the mind, and tends to produce that modicum of tiredness necessary to sleep.

Then, the old method of fatiguing the mind to sleep by watching and counting an imaginary flock of sheep, as it passes through a gap in a hedge, has something to say for itself. We have also known those who have adopted other but similar exercises with good results. The writer was assured by one troubled with wakefulness that he found the picturing of a moving black billiard ball, on a billiard table, most helpful as an inducement to sleep. There can be no doubt that such methods of beguiling the mind, being forms of mental concentration, are in accordance with the principle that a measure of fatigue is an essential condition for the desired end.

It may be said that, sometimes, the difficulty is not so much that of inducing the fatigue required, as of being what is described as "too tired to sleep." The explanation of this is probably that here the toxins of fatigue irritate rather than soothe the brain cells. Most of us also know something of it, as a result of taking too long a walk or of a day's unrelieved excitement. In such cases, the writer has found that a warm bath may be most efficacious, as may be stimulants like tea or coffee. In any case, sleep conditions under such circumstances take

time, and one must be patient until the body is more or less rested.

(2) Next, diminished blood pressure upon the brain is of vital importance. It is easy to demonstrate that this is what happens in the state of sleep. It is proved that during sleep the brain substance becomes anæmic and actually shrinks within the cranium. This is most likely an explanation of the fact that sleepiness often follows the partaking of a meal. The digestive organs draw off the blood from the brain, in the process of digestion, and hence the tendency to sleep. Indeed, it may be laid down as a psychological axiom that the greater the blood supply the greater the brain activity, and consequently the less favourable are the sleep conditions. And the converse is equally true, the less the blood supply the less the cerebral activity, and so the more favourable are the conditions for sleep.

All and every legitimate means should therefore be employed in order to create those quiet reposeful conditions which, in such cases, are absolutely essential.

These conditions may be set forth as external and internal. The external conditions are fairly well known, though not always observed. As much fresh air, during the day, as possible, along with moderate exercise, are the prime essentials. Following these are other elementary conditions such as a darkened, well-aired, quiet sleeping apartment. And last, but often not least, the nature of the bed

and the position of the body. It is now generally conceded that the feather bed tradition never was what it claimed to be. Experience has proved that a fairly hard bed yields better results, and that the hair mattress approaches the ideal as nearly as may be. It is important also that attention should be paid to the height of the head in lying down to sleep. Personally, we have found that a fairly high pillow is favourable. It is sufficient, however, to keep the point in mind, and to arrange matters in such a way as experience may justify.

The internal conditions necessary for a proper regulation of the blood supply to the brain are, in the main, fairly well known. They are freedom from worry, a quiet mind, the absence of exciting causes such as late study, or the burning of the midnight oil. Speaking from personal experience, we have found the following to be amongst the most dire mental excitements and the unfailing foes of sleep. First, the mental effort involved in attempting creative work, such as writing a composition for the pulpit, the platform or the press. It is vain to expect to get to sleep quickly, at 1 a.m. after three hours' mental exertion of this kind, and the man with a highly strung temperament is asking too much of Nature when he asks for sound, restful sleep in such circumstances.

Again, we have found, not infrequently, that a common and serious pitfall is the temptation to contentious discussion late at night. Something is

said with which we do not agree, or which violently arouses one's opposition and, in a moment, the emotions are on fire. Almost before we realise it we have entered the lists, summoning all our wits for points and arguments with which to bear down the foe. And the result? A disturbed night and serious loss of sleep.

Further, late hours and sleeplessness are more intimately connected than is commonly supposed. For reasons which may not be always clear, sleep comes more easily and more naturally, and therefore more restfully, well before midnight, than in the early hours of the morning. From all accounts, the sleep we get when the night is fairly young is far more restorative than that which we get when the night is far spent. Nature indicates the best sleeping periods, and we cannot do better than follow her dictates. Nature, in animal life, as in the life of man, has clearly shown that the proper time for sleep is as near to the close of day as may be, and not as near to the dawn as may be. Probably the reason for this is the one with which we are dealing, viz. that the blood pressure upon the brain is less at certain times than at others, and that those times are the opportunity of sleep.

It would also seem that here, as elsewhere, the law of rhythmic processes holds sway. The stream of life does not flow on evenly night and day. It moves in an ascending and descending scale, and sleep comes best at certain periods in this upward

and downward movement. Now, this periodicity, if we may term it such, is seriously disturbed by late hours. Near and after midnight, the mind is often abnormally active. It is an unnatural condition. This undue excitement is a sure sign that the law of periodicity has been defied. In no department of man's being is law more sovereign than it is in the conditions regulating our sleeping or unconscious state, and woe to those who persistently ignore it.

(3) The third condition necessary to restful sleep is the minimum of mental activity. This may be regarded as a corollary of the second condition, diminished blood pressure on the brain, since sleep and blood pressure are so intimately connected.

Now, in most cases of nervous breakdown, this mental leisure is often hard to procure. Even when the eyes are closed, and the ceaseless flow of external impressions is arrested, memory is busy recalling the thousand and one things which have appealed for attention during the day. By every possible means, therefore, a determined effort should be made not only to close the door of the mind upon passing impressions, but also upon the activities of the memory in reproducing them. Some troublesome transaction or source of anxiety, some important appointment made, or some liability recalled and feared, in these and a thousand other ways, the mind becomes inflamed, and the blood is sent rushing through the brain, with the result that sleep

has definitely fled and is not easily charmed back again.

And this is a very special danger to those afflicted with nerve trouble. By all such, therefore, the habit of closing the mind to these recurring impressions and mental activities should be sedulously cultivated. It will be found to be the more easily attained if we try to forestall these activities by occupying ourselves with thoughts tending to soothe and pacify the mind. Let a definite attempt be made to recall pleasant things. The happy jest, the good story, the kindly act, the genial acquaintance, "the stroke of luck," and whatever is of good report, think on these things, and so the quiet mind may be induced, and the foundations of a good night's rest securely laid.

Readers of the special class with whom we are dealing will do well to give heed to the following points:—

(*a*) Make the most of the psychological moment. Upon retiring to rest, it frequently happens fairly early that the mind is disposed to settle down. Sleep comes gently and shyly, touching the mind lightly, and it seems as if it has come to stay. Then, suddenly, like a frightened bird, sleep has flown and the mind wakes up afresh, and sometimes hours of wakeful restlessness ensue. This first approach of sleep is the psychological moment. When it comes, keep perfectly still, breathe deeply and regularly,

and picture the sleeping state, telling yourself that sleep has come.

(*b*) Lie on your left side, when you lie down. At the first real signs of approaching sleep, turn on your right side, determining not to turn again. Keep the upper part of the body warm, no less than the lower extremities. Relax the body completely, unstringing both muscles and nerves. Give yourself up completely to your resting place, and generally, both mentally and bodily, assume the attitude of sleep.

Repeat to yourself firmly and distinctly some such words as these, "I am going to sleep quickly to-night; I feel certain I shall sleep; I shall sleep to-night." Not only should such words be repeated just before bedtime, but also occasionally during the daytime. If this is done, care being taken to root out of the mind disturbing thoughts, experience has proved that such means may be surprisingly helpful.

(*c*) Fill the vacancies of the tired mind with tranquil thoughts. It is not enough to cast the disturbing thoughts and ideas out of the mind. Their place must be taken by their opposites. The prime source of restful thoughts and noble expression is Holy Writ. It has been proved that the quiet, firm repeating to one's self, at night, of such expressions as the following has a sure and steady influence upon the mind: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under

the shadow of the Almighty," or "Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God," or "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

The writer has often been surprised to find how a few lines of poetry, unconsciously or consciously recalled the last thing at night, tend to quiet the mind, especially if there is melody and rhythm in them. The following are examples of what we mean:—

"Slowly on falling wing
Daylight has passed:
Sleep, like an angel kind,
Folds us at last."

"The steps of faith
Fall on the seeming void—and find
The rock beneath."—WHITTIER.

"Out of the shadows of night
The world rolls into light,
It is daybreak everywhere."—LONGFELLOW.

"Hushed are the sheep bells afar on the moorland,
O'er the still meadows the night breezes sweep,
Faint fall the footsteps in city and hamlet,
Safely the children are folded in sleep."

Let such passages and selections occupy the mind, committing them to memory, repeating and musing over them before or during the night watches, and we are confident they will do something, at least, to create those special mental conditions which are essential to calm and restful sleep.

But there are many things we must not do if

sleep is found to be shy or difficult to induce. Among others, are the following:—

DON'TS

1. Don't take drugs. Drugged unconsciousness is not sleep. The practice is a slippery slope and often ends in serious consequences.

2. Don't smoke within an hour of going to bed. Some may do this with impunity, but not the class with whom we are especially dealing.

3. Don't take tea or coffee just before retiring. These are stimulants and excite rather than allay mental activity.

4. Don't indulge in lobster salad at midnight—if you would get to sleep quickly. Tasty dishes may be very agreeable, even at a late hour; they are not exactly sleep charms, however.

5. Don't talk politics after 9 p.m. It often means bad feeling or loss of temper. Sleep and bad temper are poor bedfellows.

6. Don't play competitive games late in the evening. You may win or you may lose. In any case, the excitement involved is not conducive to sound sleep.

7. Don't read books like Wilkie Collins' "The Woman in White," after 10 p.m. Ghostly stories inflame the mind, and seriously retard the approach of sleep.

8. Don't retire angry or "upset." Anger is a serious mental irritant. As soon as possible, be at peace; for peace of mind is the forerunner of sleep.

9. Don't take thought for the morrow, to-night: *i. e.* don't be fearful about it. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

10. Don't look at your bank-book late at night. You may find that there is an adverse balance at the bank. This is not exactly a thought conducive to sleep.

11. Don't retire to rest with cold extremities. Comfort is favourable to sleep, and cold feet are not comfortable.

12. Don't grouse or find fault when it is time to say "good-night." Grousing disturbs ourselves as well as others, and the disturbed mind doesn't easily sleep.

CHAPTER XI

HEALTH HABITS

No one knows much about nervous breakdown who does not know that it is directly related to general health. It is therefore useless seeking and applying remedies for specific nerve trouble unless due attention is first of all paid to one's general condition. Frequently it happens that "being out of condition" is at least an accompaniment of nervous exhaustion. The nervous system does not rest upon an independent basis. It is related and inter-related with the main structure of our physical life. So that the one must be considered and dealt with in conjunction with the other.

It may be said that some of the best and most nervous work, that is, work marked by warmth and movement, has been done by those whose general health was anything but good. Shelley, Carlyle, and Robert Louis Stevenson are cases in point. This is true enough in a way. Robert Louis Stevenson, for example, did some of his best work in bed. That charming little volume, "The Child's Garden of Verses," was written in bed, with the left arm, his right arm being bandaged to his side

because of hemorrhage. But where such good work is done under such distressing conditions, it surely has been done in spite of ill-health, not because of it.

Among the first things, therefore, which those suffering from nerve troubles should consider is the matter of general fitness. It is vain for a man to complain that his nerves are "jumpy" if he eats food which does not agree with him. It is self-mockery to be careless as to "taking cold," and then expect to "feel fit," at the same time.

What is needed in such cases as those with which we are dealing is not to do the things they know they ought not to do, and to do the things they know they ought to do. Mostly, it is not knowledge that we lack but the will to act upon our knowledge. Having said so much as to the importance of good general health, we now pass on to definite suggestions.

(1) In all cases of nervous breakdown, it is a wise thing to consult a medical man, especially if the right kind is available. It is fairly easy, nowadays, to find a doctor who not only understands the trouble, but who has the sympathy and insight necessary for true understanding. There are times in the lives of those whose nerves are easily spent when, after all they can do for themselves, the advice and temporary help of a wise, sympathetic physician is an invaluable if not indispensable aid.

(2) We come now to what the writer has found to be one of the most effective of all remedies for

nerve troubles, Deep Breathing. The central part of the human frame is the chest, and to a large extent the vital parts of the body are located there. If it is a fact, as we understand it is, that the entire mass of blood in the body passes through the heart and lungs twelve times in the hour, that, by this means, the blood is vivified and redistributed throughout the body, then it is sun-clear that too great importance can hardly be attached to the daily practice of inhalation and exhalation.

The method found to have yielded splendid results is to take twenty deep breaths upon rising, and before taking a sponge bath. Ten breaths should be taken in each of the two positions herein described. First, the arms should be extended at right angles to the body, the hands meeting, and the chest being well brought out. As the arms are brought back as far as possible horizontally, a deep breath should be taken slowly, the breath being exhaled as the arms are moved forward again until the hands meet. Second, and similarly, raise the arms from the sides until the hands meet above the head, taking a deep breath at the same time. Then lower the arms into position, exhaling at the same time. Inhale through the nose. Exhale through the mouth. The breaths should be inhaled and exhaled slowly and regularly, keeping time with the movements of the arms.

By this means, the most important parts of the nervous system are gently but firmly exercised, thus

being toned and braced up. If such exercises are persistently done, and a few others of a general character are also practised, such as stimulate the general circulation of the blood, we are confident that the results will be surprising.

It should be borne in mind that the sponge bath immediately following these exercises is of vital importance. Let it be cold if possible. If the health is such that the regime is too severe, though this is not commonly the case, then approach the cold sponge as nearly as may be. Usually no injurious effects will follow. Provided the blood is freely circulating, the reaction takes place at once. Of course, the whole proceedings are followed by a good brisk "rub down" with a rough towel. When the operation is complete, one is conscious of something of the meaning of the word health.

(3) Good health is next to impossible without due regard to exercise. It is especially so in regard to nervous ailments. It is, however, impossible to generalise wisely as to the kind or amount of exercise required. These must vary according to the constitution, condition and temperament in each case. But exercise of some kind, and in some measure, is imperative. As Frederick the Great is reported to have said, "Man seems more adapted for a postillion than a philosopher." Sedentary habits are inimical to a good, sound, healthy nervous condition. The more natural one's habits are the bet-

ter, and whether it is walking or golf or gardening, exercise cannot be dispensed with.

The writer has found walking and cycling to be among the best forms of exercise. Golf, too, has much to say for itself. Provided one does not play beyond his strength, as he is very apt to do, it is an ideal game for those whose nerves are upset and who need an interest such as can take them out of themselves. Its movement, its interest, its possibilities for dexterity, and its immediate and yet postponed aims, these, along with the hopes it engenders and the despair it triumphs over, all combine to make it the favourite pastime it has become. Where those suffering from nervous troubles are not immoderately carried away by the game, and so tempted beyond their strength, golf is one of the finest aids possible for the rebuilding of the shattered nervous system.

(4) Further, too much importance cannot be attached to fresh air. This is especially important at the very beginning of nerve trouble. In most cases, it is not possible to choose the exact neighbourhood in which it is best to live. But, it is always possible to get the best out of one's surroundings, wherever one's lot may be cast. Generally speaking, one should flee bad air as much as possible, both indoors and out. Personally, we have found that a dry bracing air is the desideratum. In any case, one can hardly have too much pure air, and for these reasons: under the influence of active

life in the open, the nutritive exchanges are stimulated, the appetite is improved, with the result that more food is taken. So that, if one's walks and exercise generally are not excessive, the body "puts on weight." Further, owing to the better respiration, the muscles involved in breathing become stronger, the breathing is deeper, and the contractile energy of the heart and vessels is considerably increased. The cumulative effect of these is that sleep becomes easier, which is a matter of first concern to the class with which we are especially dealing. What is to be aimed at is the fresh-air habit, the ordering of one's life so that as much of it as possible is spent in the open.

It is interesting and illuminating to note that the old English families were, and are, county families, not town families, and, from all accounts, these families were, and are, of a virile race, living their lives away from the towns and cities, which, in these days, are the great nerve-racking centres. The moral is plain, and our aim in this chapter is to point the moral to all those whose nerves are on edge, and who are paying the penalty of an artificial and over-stressed life.

The writer has found that the best results accrue from a lavish use of his own garden. Being favoured by locality, he has made the most of it. It is possible to spend most of one's spare time in walking and resting under the shadow of one's own vine and fig-tree. It is not necessary to have a large

garden, and it is possible to make a lot out of a little. A small garden, well set out, with plenty of colour in it, may be a source of unimaginable refreshment. A fairly comfortable garden seat and a hammock lend themselves to the most pleasant and recreative treatment. With the aid of a cushion and a rug one can spend most of his evenings outside, not merely idly passing the time, but doing various kinds of work. Further, we have found that the sleep one gets in a hammock, on a summer's night, is about as helpful to jaded nerves as anything we can imagine. Provided one is well clothed, or wrapped up, there is no danger, and such a practice is quite feasible during several months of the year, even in a climate so variable and uncertain as our own.

(5) As to diet, it is almost sufficient to call attention to its importance. It is important because, in serious nerve trouble, the digestive apparatus is almost immediately affected. It can hardly be said that there is a special diet regime for nerve troubles. Still, there can be no question that, in such cases, diet may be, and ought to be, directed along special lines. Here, one cannot do better than put himself into the hands of his physician.

Generally speaking, the consensus of expert opinion leans to the view that the food taken is usually excessive, especially among the so-called better classes. Formerly, it was held that a larger quantity was necessary than is allowed to-day. At the

present time, the proper mastication of one's food is not given a second place either to the quality or the quantity. Mastication of each mouthful of food, until all sense of taste is gone, is held to-day as one of the prime factors in longevity.

This was the gospel of men like Mr. Horace Fletcher. After the most careful experiments, he found that by eating slowly one could do with less food and, at the same time, accumulate a greater reserve of energy.

Mr. Gladstone assured us that the secret of his splendid health was his habit of taking twenty-five bites at every bit of meat. How far this practice interfered with the pleasures of social intercourse, at meal times, is an interesting question, bearing in mind his extraordinary conversational powers. At any rate, Gladstone in this respect is an example, for there can be no doubt that most of us incline to eat too much and to eat too fast. The result is that too much of our energy goes into our digestion and too little into our work.

> "Go to your banquet then, but use delight
> So as to rise still with an appetite."

Personal experience, as well as general observation, has convinced the writer that the tobacco habit is often a serious factor in some forms of nervous ailments. Some medical authorities avow that excessive smoking is one of the exciting causes of nerve trouble. Of course, we are now dealing with the

use of tobacco as it bears upon the problem of nervous breakdown. Our aim is simply to indicate how far it helps or hinders in arresting the trouble, and in restoring the shattered nervous system.

It may be said, first of all, that there is considerable agreement that tobacco, even in nerve strain, may not be harmful, where it is indulged in in strict moderation. To begin with, there is little doubt that it has laxative properties. Experience confirms this beyond doubt. Then, at certain times and under certain conditions, it has been proved to be a comfort. After unusual strain or mental excitement, the writer has found that its soothing effects have been beneficial. He has also proved that whilst a little helps under these conditions, the little more does real mischief. Further, a pipe or a cigar, after a meal, has this further use, it inclines the smoker to that half an hour's rest, in the semi-recumbent position, which is so helpful to proper digestion.

Experience has demonstrated that, for the class of people with whom we are dealing, tobacco is harmful, except in moderation and immediately after meals. We have seen cases, both among men and women, in which the nervous system has been seriously affected by the excessive use of tobacco, especially where the habit of inhaling has been acquired. Indeed, in some cases, especially among women, there can be little doubt that the cigarette habit has been the exciting cause.

No doubt the use of tobacco, in many cases, is rather an effect than a cause. It is the blind attempt to mitigate some of the most troublesome symptoms of nerve trouble. It is certain, however, that often the remedy here is worse than the disease, and that ultimately it does immeasurable harm.

Speaking of alcohol in relation to nervous ailments, we say most emphatically that it is distinctly harmful. It is bad, first, because it deranges the processes of nutrition, and, secondly, because of its own toxic or poisonous effects. Since depression and general low vitality are frequently the accompaniments of nervous disorders, the temptation to resort to alcoholic stimulants finds in such sufferers an easy prey. The temptation, however, must be resisted to the death, for that way madness lies. The safe road both for men and women, suffering from nervous ills, is to flee alcohol entirely, since alcohol affects not only the brain but the nervous system generally.

Such, then, are the general lines along which those suffering from nervous breakdown should proceed, if their general fitness is to be maintained, and their special trouble kept well in hand. The whole is greater than its part, and mostly the part is affected by the whole. It is therefore of supreme importance that matters like deep breathing, exercise, fresh air, diet and stimulants should be seriously considered, if a return to a reasonable measure of sound health is to be attained. Given a fair amount of

time and attention along the lines we have suggested, we are confident that the victims, with whom we are dealing, may look forward with hope and confidence.

DON'TS

1. Don't neglect your general health. Your nerves depend upon your general fitness.

2. Don't think too much about your health. Take care of your health habits, and your health will take care of itself.

3. Don't forget that fresh air means fresh life. Open spaces and sunlight are the best nerve tonics.

4. Don't lounge through life. Move briskly and buoyantly. Exercise is the secret of strength, and is possible in our ordinary walking movements.

5. Don't bolt your food. Twenty bites to a mouthful, it is avowed, will add twenty years to your life.

6. Don't smoke to excess. If you must smoke, do it in strict moderation, and avoid cigarettes, which often mean the vicious habit of inhaling.

7. Don't take alcohol. It is the arch foe of the brain, and the destroyer of the nerve tissue.

8. Don't think illness but health.

CHAPTER XII

MENTAL CONTROL

It is when the man, suffering from nervous breakdown, realises that his trouble is mental as well as nervous that he becomes alarmed. When he finds that he cannot attend, that the memory has become fitful and unreliable, and that he cannot keep his mind focussed upon a given point for long, if at all, it is then that he becomes aware of the seriousness of his case. His mind flits from point to point. It does not rest firmly upon anything it sees or hears, and hence bad impression and poor power of recall. In brief, he has lost control over his mental activities, and loss of control here is vital, since personality itself is a mind under the guidance of that mysterious entity we call the "self."

The writer himself knows how utter is the feeling of helplessness when the mind has fallen into this condition. He knows the confusion which ensues when, in conversation, for example, the thread of discourse is suddenly broken, and the mind cannot recall even the subject of conversation. He also knows how distressing it is to be forced to close the book or the newspaper, owing to the pains in

the head which accompany such attempts. These and similar experiences are the unmistakable signs that the nervous system is perilously impaired, and that the time has come for the most serious treatment.

The brain is largely composed of an elaborate system of nerve centres. It is as these centres work harmoniously together that the brain functions in a normal and healthy manner, and the mind thinks and feels in right proportions and relations. It is this lack of harmonious working, between the nerve centres, which probably accounts for that lack of balance and proportion so commonly found in cases of nervous breakdown. The hypersensitiveness, the touchiness, the annoyance at trifles, and the imagined slights, these, along with the gloom which settles upon the mind from time to time, are the results of derangement in the nerve centres. In other words, they are the result of breakdown in the nervous system.

Now, the causes of this breakdown, as we have seen, are various. But whatever the cause there is always present the physical factor. Ultimately, it means lack of nerve energy, which again means impoverishment in the nerve cells, the treatment of which we have dealt with elsewhere.

Besides the physical factor, however, there is the mental, and it is to the latter, as much as to the former, that we must look for restoration and reconstruction. As Dr. Robertson Wallace says, in

his illuminating little book on "Nervous Disorders of Modern Life," the flabby brain is no more fit for sound cerebral activity than the flabby heart for an efficient circulation. It must be toned up by exercise of sheer will-power, cured of its inherent tendency to aberration, by practice of the habit of mental concentration, by the strengthening of its powers of observation, differentiation, perception, reasoning, memorising, and other faculties." That is to say, mental control is the result of strict discipline, and it is to the best means of imposing such discipline upon the mind that we now turn our attention.

First.—It is important to remember that almost our first concern, in regaining the control of the mind, is the acquiring of the habit of inhibition. But what is inhibition? The term really means restraint. In the special connection with which we are dealing, it means the bringing about of diminished activity. It is the power of not doing or feeling or thinking. At once, we realise that inhibition touches one of the leading weaknesses of highly strung nervous people. Time after time they find themselves doing things they know they ought not to do, and giving in to stimuli to which they feel they ought not to respond. This means lack of mental control, that is to say, lack of inhibition.

It is said by Dr. D. Fraser Harris, in his fascinating little work on "Nerves," that "a person, no matter how highly educated otherwise, is a neural monster if he has not inhibition." Inhibition, then,

has this initial advantage; it means an economy of energy. By reining in the movements of a horse, we reserve activities which may express themselves later in doing draught work, or in increasing its speed. Similarly inhibition, in those suffering from nerve strain, means the economising of nerve forces, which otherwise might be squandered, and which may be rightly directed towards definite ends.

To illustrate what we mean, take the case of the impulse to cough. It is purely what we may call a reflex action, that is, one which takes place without the interposition of the brain. It is an action not completely within the power of mental control. But we can restrain the tendency to cough. As we can partly check movement of the limbs when we are tickled, so we can check, up to a certain point, the tendency to cough. This is inhibition. The same thing applies to the tendency to be moved strongly by some emotion, such as results from hearing bad news. The initial depressing effect may be corrected by the action of the will. So that whether the reflex action be of a conscious or unconscious kind, it may usually be modified at least by determined control.

Let the habit of correcting or controlling these reflex actions be cultivated. By this means, we shall save potencies and energies which at present are wasted, and which are necessary not only for the repair of the nervous system, but also for the acquiring of mental control.

Secondly.—Those suffering from nervous breakdown, and who consequently have partly or wholly lost the power of seeing and remembering detail, should begin to attend, for attention is the first rung in the ladder of concentration. And they should begin by developing the powers of sight and hearing, since it is chiefly by these two means that attention is acquired.

How frequently we exclaim when spoken to, "What's that?" or "What do you say?" The fact is we know what it is that is said to us. It is frequently lack of attention that forces the question, "What's that?" The mind is away, perhaps on a journey, whilst the eye or the ear only is attending. And what one has to strive for is the perfectly harmonious working together of mind and sense, so that the act of seeing or hearing shall be complete and immediate.

Now, the power of attending is based upon interest. Attention, however, is almost impossible, unless it is stimulated in this way. Hence, if there is no interest there can be little or no attention. Strive, therefore, to arouse interest in the matter which calls for attention. Lack of interest often means lack of knowledge, and the fact is that attention and interest may be, each in turn, both cause and effect. We become interested by attending, and we attend best when we are interested. In any case, and by any and every means, we must acquire the

habit of attention if we would recover the power of mental control.

It should be said that the discipline involved in acquiring or regaining the power of attention may be itself exceedingly interesting. It need not be very difficult, provided the exercises are wisely chosen. The following exercises are suggested:—

1. Note carefully the features, in detail, of two or three faces each day. Force yourself to describe each feature minutely. Write your description in a note-book, so that you may be able to test your accuracy by reference.

2. Examine the clock on the mantel-shelf. Look carefully at the dial plate, at the hands, at the case, searching for detail which hitherto has escaped your attention. Listen to the ticking of the clock, and note the peculiar kind of noise it makes when being wound up.

3. Take a good look into a room. After a couple of glances, close the door, and describe as well as you can the number and kind of articles within. The colour and pattern of the carpet, the number of the chairs and the kind of upholstering, the number of the pictures and the kind of framing and the nature of the subjects. These, and such like detail, should be noted, and, by practice, a certain amount of speed in description attained.

In each case, accuracy should be our first aim, and then speed. Look at the object for a couple of seconds, and then test yourself as to the quality and amount of detail you have grasped. Pay attention to things. Note carefully and exactly colours, shapes, sizes, bulk, and so on. And remember that sight is mental as well as physical. There-

fore, look with the mind. Listen with the mind. Be alert. Often, there's life in a look, and to fail to notice is frequently to fail to live. The following exercises are suggested as good objects for observation: (*a*) A fountain pen, (*b*) a watch case, (*c*) a penny piece, (*d*) a letter in the alphabet, (*e*) a leaf, (*f*) a pair of scissors.

"But what is the use of noting so much detail?" it may be asked. "Does it not unnecessarily burden the mind?" Commonly, detail itself may not be of first-class importance, though in some cases it is vital. The primary object of observing detail, in this connection, however, is not the value of the detail itself so much as the mental exercise involved in seeing or grasping it. It means the development or the recovery of the power of attention and, since attention is the first movement of the mind in the process of concentration, it is the a, b, c of mental control or efficiency. We cannot concentrate or gain control over the mind unless we can first of all attend.

Now, in nervous breakdown, lack of the power of attention is a leading symptom. The mind turns away from detail, lacking the nervous energy necessary for attention. Owing to nervous derangement, there is a lack of patience and the power of taking pains. It is as we cultivate this ability to take pains, and to be careful of small detail, that the mind regains its normal power of attention and concentration.

Therefore, pay attention. Take careful note of qualities, distinctions, relations, outlines and special features. Mark the place whence you take, and where you put things. Have a place for everything, and put everything in its place. Further, note the lines of streets and squares, and the names of them. Keep the north and south positions in mind, so that you may be sure of directions. Associate names and faces. Do not think of the one without the other. Accustom yourself to note points in your walks, to observe special characteristics of the people you meet, and, generally, to mark the outlines of your immediate surroundings.

Thirdly.—Mental control is dependent upon the power of concentration, as we have seen in the foregoing remarks on attention. Now, the material or objects of concentration may be roughly divided into things and thoughts. As we have seen, our first efforts should be directed towards things. The reason is obvious. It is easier to attend to or concentrate on things than on ideas. Even when attending to things, the common difficulty is mind-wandering. And this weakness of mind-wandering is very common, not only in cases of nervous breakdown, but generally. It is lack of control which, in every case, means mental inefficiency.

Having given due regard and practice to attending or concentrating on things, we are then the better able to concentrate on thoughts or ideas. Until we have attained some measure of mastery in at-

tending to things we cannot hope to grasp firmly abstract realities like ideas, thoughts, principles, arguments, and the rest. That is to say, we must do first things first, and then the problem of concentration is not so difficult.

Supposing a certain point in the line of battle is threatened by the enemy. The thing to do is to concentrate your forces there, until the danger is past. The class of people with whom we are dealing must adopt a similar method. All the forces of the mind must be mobilised at the point of stress. Sometimes the cause of their breakdown is this lack of mental mobilisation, this inability to bring all the powers of the mind to bear upon a crisis or a grief, or a difficult situation. Hence, chaos in the nervous machine. Through lack of training, maybe, or carelessness as to their mental habits, disaster both to health and position overtakes them. The remedy is to attend to things, as indicated. When a measure of facility has been acquired, concentration is in sight, and mental control saves the situation.

The immediate problem for those suffering from nervous breakdown is commonly the problem of how to concentrate on a book, or an argument, or a lecture or sermon, and especially upon some critical crisis in their own lives. Their difficulty is inability to mobilise their nervous and mental energies at a given point, and at will. Finding this beyond their power, they are apt to give up, and to let

things drift. To do so, of course, is to be defeated. This is not the solution of the difficulty but the surrender to it. It is handing over the key of life into the hands of death. Therefore, in addition to what has been said on attention, we submit the following exercises on concentration, which is really the intensive development of the power of attention as applied more especially to ideas and lines of thought.

(*a*) First, make up and repeat, backwards and forwards, lists of words connected together by association. For example, chair, comfort, health, seaside, tourist, Thos. Cook & Sons, Continent, Paris, League of Nations, and so on. Here is a list or chain of words which may be extended to any length. Each word is connected in the chain by association. By such a simple means many ideas may be held by the mind quite easily. It is the mental effort involved in the linking up of these words that is important. Such exercises not only imply control of the mind, but they help, at the same time, to strengthen the nerve centres and to brace up the mental faculties.

Professor Blackie speaks, in his delightful little book on "Self-Culture," of the "binding power of the mind, which is necessary for all sorts of reasoning, and teaches the inexperienced really to know what necessary dependence, unavoidable sequence, or pure causality means." Such exercises as the one suggested will help in this respect. Price lists, shopping lists, heads of lectures and sermons, each and

all may be treated in this way. As an aid to memory, the habit is invaluable, whilst as discipline for the mind it is essential to the possession of any mental power worthy of the name.

(*b*) Take a paragraph from Ruskin, or a short passage from Milton or Shakespeare. Get at the idea or ideas in such passages quite clearly, and then express them in your own words. As a beginning, simple passages may be selected, in which the ideas and connections are fairly easy to grasp. Then, take passages a little more difficult, treating them similarly. After a time it may be well to select a few passages from Browning's "Saul" or the "Ring and the Book," extracting their hidden meaning, and expressing it again in your own way. For those who may find this somewhat beyond them, passages from Longfellow or Tennyson or from Scripture, or even from nursery rhymes, may be utilised. In each case, a demand will be made upon sustained mental effort, and the response to that demand is the all-important thing.

(*c*) If one is fond of music, and people with a temperament mostly are, it is an excellent exercise to listen carefully to a piece of good pianoforte music. Note carefully the groundwork. It is not infreqently as interesting and pleasing as the melody or the singing element in the composition. Further, try and find out the phrase or passage upon which the entire composition is built. Keen, sustained attention will very often reveal to you the

motif of the piece. In other words, try and find out the text or the theme which inspired the composer in writing it.

(*d*) Get some one to play a few bars of music to you, a short passage having rhythm and melody in it. Then try and recall the entire passage, after an interval of ten minutes or half an hour. Begin with short, simple passages and, as you gain mastery, let them be longer and more complex. The advantage of this exercise is that it may, being an appeal to the feelings as well as the thought, relieve the strain in the mental effort. At any rate, it gives variety to one's concentration efforts.

(*e*) The writer has found it to be a capital exercise to try and revive some particularly interesting chapter in one's life. Circumstances forced him some years ago to go abroad for some time. The experience was so unique and so interesting that it stands apart as one of the minor chapters in his life. The incident, however, has been lived over and over again, and has been a source of refreshment during many of the shadowed hours of his life. His method has been the following. Beginning with the moment of leaving home, and following each point in the journey, outwards and homewards, he has many a time been able to reproduce, in wonderful detail, the entire incident. In this way, through practice and concentration, he has found in the mind a moving picture more animating and more living than the most interesting cinematograph.

Thus, sufficient has been said to indicate the lines along which we may win mental control by means of concentration. There are endless varieties of possible exercises, and the more we can devise such for ourselves the better. The important thing is to bear in mind that discipline there must be, if the mind is to be our servant and not our master. Especially is discipline necessary where nerve strain is present. Thought and nerve cells do not exist apart from each other. What the precise relation is, is one of the mysteries. What is certain, however, is that they act and react upon each other, and that mental discipline is as necessary to the body as bodily exercise is to the mind. Therefore, let the mind, no less than the body, be duly exercised. In no other way is it possible to win the crown of life, which is "mens sana in corpore sano."

PRACTICAL HINTS

1. Accustom yourself to check the mind's tendency towards empty and aimless wandering. Keep the reins of the mind firmly in hand.

2. When confusion attends the effort of sustained concentration, give the mind a rest, and resume the effort later.

3. Harm may be done by forcing the mind beyond its strength. Therefore do not concentrate to such an extent as to dim consciousness itself.

4. In nervous cases especially, better attempt frequent and easy acts of concentration than long and difficult ones. More ambitious efforts may be attempted later.

5. When concentration is hard, if not impossible, do not

lose hope and confidence, but remind yourself that the ultimate cause is illness of the nerve centres, and that renewed health is possible and likely.

6. The secret of the recovery of the power of concentration lies in making small efforts each day, and not big efforts spasmodically.

7. It is wise to find out which part of the day is most conducive to the practice of concentration. In most cases, it is unwise to make serious efforts late at night.

8. When attempts are made to concentrate, they should be done with a will. The test should be not how long, but how thorough.

CHAPTER XIII

POISE AND SERENITY

One of the inevitable signs of nervous breakdown is lack of poise and serenity. Usually, this lack of poise has a threefold origin. It is partly physical, partly mental, and partly moral or spiritual. When the nervous system is out of order, when the mental faculties are not under control, and when the spirit itself is torn by conflict between inclination and duty, it is then that one's balance is upset, and a serene and tranquil spirit is far from us.

1. But what is poise? The question needs to be put and answered if poise is to be recovered or cultivated. In general terms, poise is that condition of body, mind, and spirit which ensues when nerves, mental faculties and spirit are at one, each in harmony with itself, and with each other. It is the repose which results from the sovereignty of the will in the totality of one's life. It is government in, and captaincy of the soul.

In one form or other, poise is found in Nature, art, and mechanics, as it is found in morals and religion. In art, it is called proportion. In mechanics, it is called equilibrium. In morals, it has been

called repose; whilst in religion it is called the "peace which passeth understanding." It is the result of rule, order, harmony.

> "Our lives are songs,
> God writes the words,
> And we set them to music at leisure,
> And the song is sad or the song is glad
> As we choose to fashion the measure."

That is to say, there must be self-conquest, and that not merely in one department of our being, but in each and all. "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control; these three alone lead life to sovereign power." "Nerves," lack of concentration, fear, timidity, these, along with the dark brood of ills which follow in their train, can only be overcome as the will suggests, directs, and controls those movements, feelings, thoughts and moods to which those suffering from nervous breakdown are in temporary bondage.

A simple illustration of poise is seen in the spinning-top. It is the embodiment of poise. It has symmetry and balance. It gravitates upon and around a point so fine as to reduce friction to a minimum. It is when in movement a capital example of rest in motion. When its poise is perfect, it hums or sings. Such is poise. The body and mind, also, which work, and yet are at rest, are in the state of poise, and it is this restful working of the whole man or woman which somehow must be at-

tained, more or less, if the nervous system is to work smoothly and perfectly.

2. Dealing with first things first, it is clear that poise is conditioned, at the very outset, by physical control. Elementary as it may seem, attention must be paid especially to the muscular movements of the body, because, in nerve trouble, it is here that breakdown is apt to reveal itself first. The muscles of the face, and of the limbs especially, have broken loose, and there can be little poise or self-possession until these are once more brought under control.

(*a*) We cannot do better than to begin with control of the eye. Most of us know how difficult it often is to look firmly and frankly into the eyes of another. But when, through practice, we develop the power, it is surprising how it steadies us, and gives us self-possession. In such practice we must not stare, and so confuse those at whom we are looking. What should be aimed at is the fearless look, which has behind it the kindly heart, and which is free from antagonism.

When speaking to individuals or to audiences, look straight at those addressed, and do it at once. In this way one may forestall fear, and undermine self-consciousness, putting oneself and one's fellows at ease. Once you can look people in the face speech is easier, and the flow of thought is freer. Hence, the nervous energy expended is not as costly

as when, through timidity, you fail to do this natural thing.

Then, we should fight against being overpowered by a look. After all, "a cat may look at a king," and the moment we surrender our right to look a man in the face, we have succumbed to a more dominating, if not superior, personality. One has often noticed a man, lacking in will-power, coming out of a wordy contest defeated, not because he has had the worst of the argument, but because his opponent looked him out of countenance. A superior force has so overshadowed him that he failed to make the best of his case.

Whilst cultivating the power of controlling the eye, therefore, we must resist the domination of those who would exercise undue influence over us. And this must be done, not in the spirit of defiance or antagonism, but in the spirit of self-respect and sincerity.

(*b*) Next, we must aim at control of the voice; because here lies part of the secret of poise. We should endeavour to speak slowly, firmly, clearly and softly. This habit is of great importance for those with whom we are especially dealing. It gives pleasure to the listener, and it gives assurance and poise to the speaker. Moreover, it means a regular and economical use of the nervous energies. In many cases, the voice is the hole in the pocket of a man's nervous resources. Owing to rapid or hasty or highly pitched words, the emotions are let loose

and passion and anger, like torrents, have the nervous forces at their mercy.

The value of voice control is seen, not only as an inducement to poise, but also as a nerve restorative, when we realise that it means control of the breath. When we speak calmly and deliberately, the breathing apparatus works naturally and smoothly. Thus we are freed from the strain and waste which accompany that gasping irregularity which is the inevitable consequence of rapid, unmeasured, and uncontrolled speech. The whole art of phrasing, whether we think of it in relation to speech or song, is really nothing more nor less than the natural control of the voice. It is simply the art of not forcing one's words, and of working within one's limitations. And to work within one's limitations is a large part of the philosophy of repose.

(*c*) Further, we must exercise control over our facial expressions, as these again do much to mar or make the spirit of poise. The face is largely the mirror of the soul. Every emotion we feel is reflected more or less in the face. It is no less true, however, that control of the face has much to do with the control of the feelings, and, since nerve control is to a great extent emotional control, it is important that the emotions should be held in check by the control of the facial muscles. For example, we can and should acquire the habit of wearing an unruffled brow. Our nervous troubles are intensi-

fied to the extent that we carry about with us the anxious tensed look. From time to time we should deliberately slacken the muscles of the face, especially those located in the forehead and near the eyes. A simple experiment will convince us that, by this means, relief is felt, and a certain amount of composure secured.

We must do what we can to "tone ourselves down," and not to allow the face to be victimised by the thousand and one agitations which perpetually harass the minds of those whose nerves are on edge. To check the frown under annoyance, deliberately to smile under provocation, to hold the facial muscles firmly when moved to tears, to prevent the face from "dropping" when in the presence of grief or sorrow, in these and other practical ways, much may be done not only to moderate the riot of one's emotional life, but also to foster and maintain calm and self-possession.

(*d*) Yet again, we must keep our limbs under control. Watch the movements of any one labouring under excitability or shyness or fear, and it will be noticed how completely the body is subservient to the storms of emotional excitement. The eyes start, the hands are clenched, hands and arms are thrown about, and the general pose of the body upset. All this means but adding fuel to the fire. The one thing necessary, under great excitement, is to keep control of the body, and so to allow our

inflamed feelings to evaporate in decency and in order.

Who has not found that when entering a room, where there are several or many people, he is more collected if, when asked to be seated, he does so deliberately and easily? To do this hurriedly or awkwardly, to slide on to the chair, instead of sitting upon it squarely and firmly, this is the way to increase our confusion and to intensify our timidity. The easy carriage and control of the body, in such and other like circumstances, reflects itself in the mind, and contributes to the state of poise and self-possession.

It may be said that such attention to physical control as we have set forth may itself lead to self-consciousness, and so to make a state of poise impossible. This may be so, to some extent, at first. After attention and training, however, control becomes habit and habit becomes unconscious.

3. But now, important as physical control is, as a condition of poise and serenity, the control of the mind is still more important. And perhaps we cannot do better than to deal briefly with some of the common ways in which lack of control over the mind exhibits itself. In this way practical hints may be thrown out, and definite counsels given.

(*a*) Foremost among the signs of poor control of the mind is self-consciousness. This is a weakness to which multitudes are subject. It exists, however, in a very pronounced form in victims to

nerves, but in each and every case it is the foe of poise and composure. To a large extent, poise, like good health, is an unconscious state. In self-consciousness the eyes have become inverted, the mind watches its own movements, and, when those movements are marred and upset, through nervous trouble, it looks upon a pitiable sight.

Perhaps it is when in company that self-consciousness most commonly reveals itself. Generally speaking, it is due to the fear that people may be looking at us, or to the fear that they may be talking about us. It may be due to simple timidity, or shyness. Sometimes the kind of company we find ourselves in explains our self-consciousness, while the cause may be in lowness of tone, or uncertainty as to our welcome.

We are convinced that a common and underlying cause of self-consciousness is lack of mental grip. When we are not certain of detail, relating to any subject that may arise in company, when we find that we cannot relate incidents and events accurately and clearly, and that our recollection is fitful and unreliable, these weaknesses destroy our confidence in ourselves, and heap increasing confusion upon the mind. Hence, self-consciousness.

But what is to be done if one would overcome this weakness and attain reasonable repose and composure? We cannot do better than say: "Be yourself." Don't try to appear to be what you are not. Remember that to listen is an art no less than to

talk. Often nervous people are distressed because they cannot talk freely upon any or every topic raised. The fact is, there are mostly those, in almost any company, who feel qualified to do so, and you may always please them and reassure yourself by listening attentively and, if possible, sympathetically.

Then, it is a wholesome thing to remind ourselves that we are not as important as our self-consciousness implies. People are not waiting to look at us, or to talk about us. Provided our bearing and behaviour are normal, the glances to which we are subject do not necessarily mean the interest and curiosity we imagine. Besides, there are but the smallest grounds for supposing that people are talking about us, in the sense that they are criticising us. People are, usually, no better and no worse than ourselves, and we may safely assume that what we are to others that they are to us.

In entering company, therefore, the first thing to do is to feel kindly, and to assume a like kindliness in those whom we meet. The next thing is to be frank and sincere, looking people in the face, and moving in a calm and leisurely manner.

It is a good thing to make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the outstanding events and topics of the day. If one's ordinary reading and observation are thorough and exact, we have many opportunities, in the company of others, when we can make our contribution to the general conversation,

and so enormously increase our self-confidence and repose.

In order to get accustomed to the sound of one's own voice, it is well to practise reading and thinking aloud. To hold an imaginary conversation with some one, to address an imaginary audience, telling it a good story or describing something you have heard or seen, this is a capital means of getting accustomed to your own voice, and so enormously increasing your social self-confidence. The great thing is to get thoroughly at home with yourself, to have yourself under easy control, and so, to be rescued from fear, that arch-foe of the mind, and that unsleeping enemy of calm and poise.

(*b*) Speaking generally, fear is not only the sign of poor self-control. It also inevitably means serious mental disturbance, and lack of poise and confidence. It is more common than one might suppose. Behind the masked lives, which so many live, there are fears, real and imaginary, such as make mental poise and inward repose impossible. Fear of failure, fear of want, fear of ill-health, and fear of the unknown future, these and many others are the ghosts that haunt the mind, and make the mind itself a place of unrest instead of a house of quiet.

Now, the first thing to be done with our fears is to face them. Usually, they are spectres of the mind, having little basis in fact or reality. Don't run away from the thing that affrights you. Tear

the veil from its face, and see it for what it actually is.

It is instructive to remember that fear and darkness often go together. This is especially so with children. Owing to the absence of light, in which our judgments are mostly formed, the imagination usurps the place of reason. Hence, fear is born, and poise and composure are destroyed.

Light, then, is the secret of how to destroy our fears, the light of reason, the light of experience, and, above all, the light of faith and trust in the ultimate love and goodness of things. Fear is doubt and despair. It must be fought with belief and hope and love. All the psychological analysis and suggestion in the world are valueless apart from this simple and restful attitude of the mind, this trustful faith in the sanity and essential goodness of life. He is kept in poise and repose whose mind rests upon Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

> "He holds no parley with unmanly fears;
> Where duty bids, he confidently steers;
> Faces a thousand dangers at her call
> And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all."

(*c*) Then, a common form of poor self-control is excessive modesty. Where this exists, there is inward disturbance and, consequently, a lack of repose. It is easily possible to know ourselves so little as to underestimate ourselves. Whilst it is true that

we ought not to think too highly of ourselves, it is equally true that we ought not to think too lowly of ourselves.

Confidence and poise are the fruits of a sense of power, and to shut our eyes to our own qualities and abilities is to undermine the very foundations of a calm and poised mind. Self-control is conditioned by self-reverence, and we do ourselves wrong when, through undue modesty, we unfit ourselves for responsibility, and, at the same time, rob ourselves of the composure which comes from a sense of personal worth and power.

We must, therefore, cultivate a healthy faith in ourselves. We must accustom the mind to think positively, to say "I can" and not "I cannot." We must learn to welcome responsibility, to trust in our own judgment, and generally to keep the helm of our lives in our own hands. Nothing can be worse, for those with whom we are dealing, than to be always depreciating themselves, and to be constantly talking about their weaknesses and failures. Weaknesses we all have, and mistakes and failures we all make. But these should not be clogs upon the mind, holding us back and bidding us take the lower seats; they should be stepping-stones inviting on to higher and better things; for it is conquest and achievement, more than anything else, which steadies the mind, and gives it a sense of calm and repose.

(*d*) It has been pointed out recently by an eminent physchologist that, quite commonly, in cases

of nervous breakdown there is a sense of inferiority which accounts for many of the ills to which neurasthenics are subject. He says that this sense of inferiority is traceable to some organic defect. Whatever be the cause, however, there can be no doubt that this feeling of inferiority is common, and that it does much to rob the mind of mental poise.

Here, it seems to us, we have the explanation of certain qualities and tendencies in the class with whom we are dealing. For example, those suffering from nerve troubles and a sense of inferiority are extremely sensitive to praise or blame: they have almost a mania for punctuality, and they have a horror of being caught "napping." Furthermore, in games of contest, as in competition generally, there is present an almost morbid fear of being beaten or outclassed. The result is that the general tension under which such people live is wasteful in the extreme. They rush through life in a chronic state of haste, and fear, and breathlessness, giving themselves no chance to be at leisure from themselves, and inevitably destroying the very conditions of mental poise and inward calm.

Now, all this must be corrected. It will help us if we remember that inferiority and superiority depend upon standards. Comparison can only be made among things which are alike, and, since no two human beings are fundamentally alike, there can really be no true standard of comparison. Let us be ourselves, therefore, perfectly natural, and

perfectly unconcerned as to the common judgment, and in this way we shall rise above all comparisons, and so enter into peace.

These, then, are a few of the usual forms in which lack of self-control reveals itself, and which are the causes of the absence of poise—self-consciousness, fear, extreme modesty, and a sense of inferiority. There are others, but under these four headings may be classed most of the weaknesses which prevent the mind from being at rest, and which hinder that inward calm which is essential to nervous and mental health.

4. As to moral control, as a condition of mental poise and general serenity, much more can be said than these pages allow. Time after time the writer has met cases in which worry and anxiety, doubt and fear, restlessness and self-dissatisfaction, are the direct results of breaches of the moral law. We are convinced that a large amount of the nervous wreckage in the world is due to moral laxity.

We cannot flout our ideals and be at peace. One cannot ignore his conscience and, at the same time, be inwardly serene. Especially is this true of those under consideration. They, above all, must "go straight" if they are to live calm, confident and balanced lives. Purity, sincerity, honesty, and general uprightness, these are the pillars of the temple of poise.

Psychology is a great science. It is becoming increasingly important. But we are convinced that

the problems involved in man's mental and moral life are not such as can be solved only along psychological lines. Psychology needs supplementing by religion. It may or may not need the crude statements commonly associated with religion to-day. But it does need faith in the ultimate and the unseen, such as eases the strain of living, and such as generates hope and gives promise of a new and better day. Physical control, mental control, and moral control, each plays its part in restoring and maintaining the nervous system, in yielding inward repose, and in bringing back the light of hope and cheer to those living in the valley of shadows. But let it not be forgotten that there is something more, and that something is the bowing down of the spirit to the highest, the holiest, and the best that we know.

PRACTICAL HINTS

1. Be natural. Don't pose or try to make an impression. The impression you make upon people is often not the one you intended.

2. Forget yourself by being interested in those about you.

3. Don't assume that because people are looking at you they are talking about you. Probably they are talking about themselves.

4. Avoid the subject of your nerves, as a topic of conversation. It is the way to increase your trouble.

5. Whilst not praising yourself in company, abstain from depreciating yourself.

6. When entering a room look at one person only, and do not look at the face until you have collected yourself.

7. Pay visits to your friends, especially to those whose homes are simple, and who have few callers.

8. Fix the length of your calls, and do not stay beyond the time.

9. Think of topics for conversation before making your calls.

10. Beware of being opinionated. It tends to confusion, both in yourself and in others.

11. Speak slowly, and let your sentences be fairly short.

12. Admiration has a steadying influence upon the mind. Therefore, say appreciative things to people, and of people, and don't be afraid of admiring qualities and things other than your own.

CHAPTER XIV

CHEERFULNESS

SPEAKING of those afflicted with nerve trouble, Professor William James says they are like a bicycle the chain of which is too tight. As a result the movements of the mind are so strained that the most wasteful friction is the result. Their need is nervous and mental relaxation. The chain of the machine must be slackened if the friction is to be reduced, and if it is to run freely and smoothly.

Now, the habit of cheerfulness is one of the best means of loosening the chain. Cheerfulness acts upon the nervous system as a lubricant acts upon the machine. Depression, gloom, or what is commonly called the "blues," must be fought, but they must be fought in a positive way. It is possible to see the bright side of things rather than the dark. This is especially so in cases where depression is due to low nervous vitality, because, in these cases, there is commonly little or no solid ground for their depression.

Bunyan knew something of the trouble we are dealing with when he said that Giant Despair "sometimes in sunshiny weather fell into fits." Now,

cheerfulness acts upon depression as the sunshine acted upon Giant Despair. It renders it powerless. It alters the attitude of the mind. It induces the upward and outward gaze as opposed to the downward and the inward. The bright, cheerful, optimistic mood has a direct influence on the nervous system. Indeed, it plays a most important part in its restoration and maintenance.

A writer in the *Lancet* said some time ago that "mental influences affect the system; and a joyous spirit not only relieves pain but increases the momentum of life in the body." The simple fact is that the great sympathetic nerves are closely connected. When one set carries bad news to the brain, the nerves which regulate the digestive organs are at once affected, with the result that indigestion is set up, and, following that, inevitable depression and low spirits.

Speaking from considerable experience the writer knows that, in cases of nervous breakdown, it is not often that the victim is heard to laugh or ever smile with anything like radiance. For days he or she will move in and out amongst family and friends, and never a bright remark or the shadow of a pleasantry is made. Even when something amusing is said, something which brings light into the eyes, and good feeling into the hearts of normal beings, it passes such people by, leaving them passive and unmoved. Instead of yielding to humour, they preserve a stolid countenance as if afraid to let them-

selves go and to become one with their kind. Whilst all the time their first and pressing need is a kind of nervous or mental explosion, such as breaks through the blocked-up passages of the nerve currents, and such as a hearty laugh or a broad smile alone can induce.

We are convinced that to the extent to which we can bring the spirit of good humour, the spirit mirth, to bear upon our depressed moods and our low states of mind, to that extent shall we be happier and stronger, and to that extent also shall we regain a normal and healthy nervous condition.

But now, it is not sufficient to tell the man who is depressed that he must be cheerful. It is just what, for the time being, he cannot be. He must be told how to be cheerful, and so we submit the following counsels to such as may be living, perhaps without protest, in the shadowland of nervous breakdown:—

First.—It is necessary to say, with emphasis, that the will itself must be summoned to our aid; counsels are vain unless the mind accepts them and wills them. We must desire and will to be cheerful or all the advice in the world is useless. In the last analysis the victim must come to his own rescue, and he can. No one is ever called to consent to a state of evil. The moment the evil is recognised, that moment the man in us stands up in protest. It is so in these distressing nervous disorders. We can do what we ought to do, and since we ought to

fight the spectres of the mind, we have within us the resources necessary for victory. As Henry Drummond used to say, "All nature is on the side of the man who tries to rise." Nature within and without comes to our aid when we rise in protest against ill-health, and the troubles we are dealing with are due to ill-health more than to anything else.

Frequently, indeed mostly, the matter is not looked at in this way. Depression is accepted. In many cases, it almost seems as if it is enjoyed. There is a tendency to find a kind of false happiness in being miserable. People nurse their depression, and so keep it alive. They are like the White Knight who carried a mouse trap with him, wherever he went, lest he should be plagued with mice. That is to say, they give place to thoughts and unpleasant possibilities which have no right to any place in the mind. In short, they allow the mind to drift until it becomes the sport and plaything of endless fancies and emotions which breed like weeds in a highly strung and disordered nervous temperament.

The first need then is protest. We must will to be cheerful. And we shall find this easier if we remember that to will to be cheerful is to will to be natural. For cheerfulness is natural to the healthy mind. John Ruskin assures us of this. "Cheerfulness," he says, "is as natural to the heart of a man, in strong health, as colour is to his cheek. And whenever there is habitual gloom there must be either bad air, unwholesome food, or erring habits

of life." Let us be natural then, and cheerfulness will soon put an end to our gloom and depression.

Second.—We must acquire the habit of definitely thinking cheerful and staying thoughts. Two thoughts cannot occupy the mind at the same time. Commonly enough, the dark thought is in occupation because the door of the mind was left open to any passing tramp. Further, not infrequently, depression is not so much the result of definite dark thoughts as of sheer vacancy. The "blues" are often the result of empty shadows, and shadows are not positive; they are simply absence of light. So that to accustom oneself to give room in the mind to bright thoughts and feelings is to close the door upon many of the ghosts which harass and disturb us.

The great Christian pioneer, St. Paul, saw the wisdom of bright and beautiful thoughts when he wrote advising people to think in such a way as to leave no room in the mind for dark or unworthy thoughts—"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things." And that is largely the secret of a bright and sunny mind.

When a room is dark and unoccupied it becomes the haunt of all kinds of creeping things. But when the blinds are drawn, the windows opened, and it is really occupied, then it becomes a place of warmth and cheer and comfort. It is even so with the mind.

It must be occupied, and it is our duty, as it ought to be our pleasure, to occupy it with thoughts and images and ideals such as can keep us human, and at the same time fit us for the exhilarating though strenuous thing we call life.

Third.—Cheerfulness must be cultivated and maintained by reading cheerful books, and thus, as in other ways, keeping in touch with cheerful people. This needs saying, since observation has shown us that in nerve trouble there is an opposite tendency. The mind is prone to seek refuge in books and teachings which, when not psychological, border on what is called the occult. The fact is, any books or teachings which tend to turn the mind in upon itself are bad, especially in cases such as those under consideration.

One's reading should be bright and healthy. It should be warm, human, and written by those whose outlook on life is kindly and believing. Pessimism and all its ways must be shunned, and a persistent effort made to see and feel the gleam and glow of life as reflected in the lives of the best and happiest in our midst.

If the writer were asked which of our modern writers has done most, in his own case, to foster the spirit of hope and cheerfulness, he would say without hesitation, Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson had the gift of good temper. He was light-hearted, without being shallow. He was an optimist, a "reasonable optimist," when the circumstances of his

life might easily have driven him into pessimism. John Kelman says of him, "when all was dark he pointed his telescope right into the blackness, and found a star." It is such people who generate hope and good cheer, and it is the fellowship of such souls which is one of the surest and best means of dissipating the gloom and sadness which are among the last infirmities of those in bondage to nervous breakdown.

There are great riches in store for those unacquainted with R. L. S., whilst those who are intimate with him will know what buoyancy and radiance mark most of his work. From one point of view, those who have not read "Treasure Island," "Virginibus Puerisque," "Travels with a Donkey," "The Child's Garden of Verses," and the "Vailima Letters," are to be envied. They are written in sunlight, and to be intimate with them is to have a haven of refuge in the darkest hour and in the gloomiest of moods.

It would be unwise to attempt to give a list, either of books or authors, best calculated to engender the spirit of cheerfulness. All that needs saying here is that one's reading should be healthy, wholesome and uplifting. One should flee the Omar Khayyam spirit as he would flee the plague, and, of most modern writers of ficition, the least helpful, for the class with whom we are dealing, is Thomas Hardy, who has been called the "Master-pessimist of our time."

For those to whom these pages are particularly addressed, a little book like "The Diary of a Nobody," by George and Weedon Grossmith, is worth all that Hardy and his school ever wrote. We are not now thinking of literary values. We are thinking of the effect of our reading upon our moods, those moods which are the offspring of an impoverished nervous system. Mr. Birrell, writing a prefatory note to "The Diary of a Nobody," says, "I do not remember who first bade me read 'The Diary of a Nobody,' the early version of which in *Punch* I had strangely overlooked. It must have been done in casual conversation. But what a casualty! I dare not tell you my view of 'Charles Pooter.' I rank him with Don Quixote."

This leads us to remark that *Punch* is a real tonic in hours of gloom. It should be read with zest, and its good things repeated. It is advisable also to make notes of humorous stories and funny illustrations. When a good thing is heard or an amusing thing seen it should be passed on, as soon as possible. In these and other ways the mind should be kept from settling down into melancholy, and the attention occupied lightly and pleasantly.

After all, one of the best uses of reading is that it heartens us for the great task of living. Mr. Balfour, speaking some time ago at a gathering of literary folk, proposing the toast to literature, said that "he drank not merely to literature, but to that literature in particular which serves the great cause

of cheering us up." It is indeed a great cause, and none know better how great it is than those whose minds are clouded and whose hearts are depressed as a result of nerve troubles resulting from abnormal pressure and strain.

Fourth.—Those to whom we are speaking should remember that sunshine is not constant. It is true that the sun is a great fixed central light, but its appearance to men everywhere is a variable quantity. It would never do to be ever in the sunlight. We need the darkness and the light. Each is good in its time. The same thing is true of life in general. In the very nature of things, we could not be always in a positively cheerful mood. Darkness and shadows have their uses, and a life of unbroken and perpetual sunshine and ease would be a poor sort of thing.

It is necessary, therefore, that those who are victims to nerves, as all others, should bear in mind that life is discipline, whatever else it is or is not, and that man is not what he is designed to be. Hence, shadow and shine, rough and smooth, fair weather and foul, each has its place and use, and we must learn to take things as they come, and not appraise them simply according to our own feelings and inclinations.

We must learn to have moderate expectations of life. To get the most and best out of it, one must react upon it, breasting and tossing aside life's experiences as the swimmer breasts and tosses aside

the waves of the sea. Indeed, the secret of the cheerful mind, when cheerfulness is rightly based, is as much associated with what is difficult in life as what is easy and agreeable. It is the triumph over difficulties, and not the being sheltered from them, that brings light into the eyes and movement into the heart. "Sick or well," wrote R. L. S., "I have had a splendid time of it, grudge nothing, regret very little." In short, the cheerful mind and the contented spirit are not found in escape from life, but somehow in the very midst of it.

This much it is necessary to say on this point, as quite frequently we have noticed that the neurasthenic is given to talk about, and look at things, as if life should be arranged for his comfort and not for his good. It is not so. In the great scheme of things in the midst of which we live, our good is primary, our comfort is secondary. Still there is comfort enough, and however difficult life may be at times, there is usually room for a happy and cheerful spirit.

"Upon the shadow of the sea
The sunset broods regretfully;
From the far lonely spaces, slow
Withdraws the wistful afterglow.

So out of life the splendour dies:
So darken all the happy skies:
So gathers twilight, cold and stern:
But overhead the planets burn.

And up the East another day
Shall chase the bitter dark away:

What though our eyes with tears be wet!
The sunrise never failed us yet.

The blush of dawn may yet restore
Our light and hope and joy once more:
Sad soul, take comfort, nor forget
The sunrise never failed us yet."

Finally.—Over and above everything that can be said psychologically as to ways and means of how to escape depression, and how to be cheerful, there is, for most of us, the ultimate question of religion. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and cheerfulness cannot issue from a source which has not in itself the conditions upon which a really cheerful mind is based. For, by cheerfulness, we do not mean mere light-heartedness, the state of mind which ripples because it is shallow. By cheerfulness we mean that happy condition of mind which, whilst seeing all the facts of life, holds firmly to the conviction that the meaning and end of all things is universally and eternally good.

Some one has remarked that the tragedy and mystery of life are such that, without faith in a loving and Beneficent Being, a cheerful mind is impossible. Certainly, there is so much amiss in us and around us that unless one believes that good is the final goal of ill, there is room for serious doubt as to whether life is, for the thoughtful man, such as warrants a philosophy of cheerfulness. Granted, however, that life is in the making, that all the pains and sorrows of existence are "but for a mo-

ment" and that a "weight of glory" is to crown all life's evils, then, it is a joy to be alive, and cheerfulness becomes us all.

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joy three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang, never grudge the throe."—
R. BROWNING.

Speaking from a wide experience, in cases of nervous troubles, the writer has noticed that, not infrequently, loss of faith is the accompaniment, if not one of the minor causes, of such troubles. Finding themselves without an anchor, in the midst of a sea of cares and worries, the nervous system breaks down under the strain, since it lacks the comforts and consolations of faith and hope. By all means, therefore, let us hold fast to the faith that life is ordered for our good, if we will, and that the end, hard as may seem the means, will ultimately vindicate the ways of God to men. It is as we are conscious that we work in fellowship with the Divine, that the strain of life is relieved, and cheerfulness becomes the natural condition of the mind. It is thus that labour becomes rest, the spirit of toil is redeemed, and we find the heart exulting—

"O, to be up and doing, O
Unfearing and unashamed to go
In all the uproar and the press
About my human business."—R. L. S.

Cheerfulness comes as a matter of course to some people. It is their temperament, and they are happy in that they need not think about it. But for some of us it is difficult, and sometimes impossible. And yet, somehow, we have to learn the art; for, as long as we live in the land of shadows and depression, we are not ourselves, and we are not efficient. The duties and tasks imposed upon us demand a cheerful spirit, if they are to be faithfully undertaken and thoroughly performed. Self-control, the habit of cheerful thoughts, cheerful books and cheerful people, a balanced view of life, and a simple Faith, it is along these lines, we feel sure, that a cheerful spirit and a contented mind are to be found.

CHAPTER XV

LAUGHTER

"And when did you have a good hearty laugh last?" the writer inquired some time ago of one of those victims to nerves, so many of whom one meets from time to time. "It is so long ago that I have forgotten," was the reply. It is a very common experience. Indeed, it is so common that one might almost deduce the principle that the lower the nervous vitality the less the inclination for mirth and laughter. Whilst it is true that, often, the disinclination for laughter is largely the result of the ills we are dealing with, it is no less true that laughter itself is a sure means of relieving, if not mitigating, the trouble.

We shall appreciate this better if we look briefly at the origin and nature of laughter.

1. Physiologically speaking, laughter is partly the involuntary movement of the muscles of the lips and of the face, resulting in a succession of abrupt sounds such as the sound "ha!" Laughter is expression, the giving vent to stored-up emotion. It is the outward sign of certain emotions, indicating pleasure or satisfaction. If the sound "ha!" is re-

peated many times, quick expulsions of breath take place, the chest and diaphragm undergoing spasmodic contractions, and the whole movement issuing in what we sometimes call "a peal of laughter."

Originally, and in primitive man, the exclamation "ha!" was probably an expression of satisfaction, either at triumph over an enemy or at achievement in the field or in the chase. "Perhaps," says Professor Sully, "the first great laugh was produced by man, or his proximate progenitor, when relief came after fear and the strain of battle." It looks, therefore, as if satisfaction and relief were associated from the beginning, and laughter is just that to-day.

The bearing of laughter upon nerve trouble is thus immediately perceived. It is seen to be one of the best means of easing and even correcting some of its worst and most distressing manifestations. The movement of the facial muscles, the exercise of the lungs, and the emotional relief resulting from these, all this, it is clear, is precisely what is needed by those who are victims to the disability under consideration.

We can all recall the intense nervous strain that was upon us in 1918, when the war was at its ugliest and most tragic stage. The daily story of the grimy and unspeakable sufferings of our soldiers, and the awful suspense under which we laboured and waited, hoping and hoping for the turn of the slowly moving tide of events. What a relief it was to read our *Punch* and laugh! When we turned over its re-

freshing pages, and read such as the following, we laughed and were, for the moment, whole again:—

"Cheerful One (to a newcomer, on being asked what the trenches are like), 'If yer stands up, yer get sniped; if yer keeps down, yer gets drowned; if yer moves, yer gets shelled; and if yer stands still, yer gets court-marshalled for frost-bite.' " Many of the funny things reported to have been said or done by the British soldier, of course, never actually happened. But the times demanded that they should happen, and happen they did to all intents and purposes. The result was expression and relaxation.

That laughter is a positive relief from physical strain may be seen in the case of the little child. Most of us have looked on with delight at the child's first attempt in the perilous art of walking. We have noted the strained, tensed look of the child, before making its first plunge into the unknown, before taking that hazardous march from the chair to its mother's knee. Was there ever a more thrilling adventure? The attention of the child is strained. Its face is set, as if for some grim struggle. The muscles of the face are taut. The whole body is keyed up for this first supreme undertaking, and the child, and we, tremble for the result. The great adventure made, there is complete relaxation and the most infectious laughter. The child has returned to itself, and it laughs as only a child can. But why does the child laugh? Because its laughter is the outward sign that its inner tension

is over; it is one of Nature's way of relieving the strain of living, that strain which is with us from the cradle to the grave.

2. Now, for most of us, laughter is a special form of relief, or momentary escape, from the hard pressure of our social life. The social state is one which is a radical departure from the primitive state. Civilisation is, to a large extent, the suppression in us of primitive tendencies and impulses. As Freud says, "The progressive renouncement of constitutional impulses, the activity of which affords the ego primary pleasure, seems to be one of the basic principles of human culture."

That is to say, man's social development is conditioned by restraint in all directions. As Dr. G. T. W. Patrick says, "The interest of the group demands self-denial, restraint and repression. And this restraint and repression must be largely self-directed, involving ever-increasing powers of attention and concentration, and resulting in rapid mental fatigue."

It is perfectly natural, therefore, that there should exist in us a certain amount of protest against this repression of primitive impulses. And this recurring protest against the restraints of the social state is a good and necessary thing, occasionally. It is good not only for the individual but also for society. Where this repression of primitive instincts is carried too far, endless nervous and other troubles are apt to arise. It is especially harmful for children.

We do not mean to say that, for children or even adults, laughter and expression of every kind and at any time is necessarily good. Expression needs to be cultivated and educated. There are things we ought not to laugh at, and there are times when laughter is entirely out of place. In any case, laughter is the rebound of the mind. It is a healthy and wholesome effort to correct the tyranny of custom and to get back to the freedom of our first estate.

There are those who affect to look down upon Charlie Chaplin, and all his "silly ways." A little thought, however, will show us that Charlie Chaplin's method is strictly psychological. When we see this inimitable child of Nature, in his long, shapeless boots, his misfitting gloves, and his small twirling stick; when we see him standing, supported only by his ridiculously slight cane, lifting his hat from the back, and generally tripping people up, we laugh in spite of ourselves. Instinctively there is in us a certain amount of consent to what he is, and what he does. That is why we laugh. In Chaplinism we revert somewhat to the elementary and the primitive; we protest in a wholesome way against correctitude and the strait-jacket which society has fastened upon us. We laugh, and are relieved or relaxed, and, so long as our laughter pains no one, we are doing a healthy and a necessary thing.

3. Among the commonest causes of laughter are those slips and lapses to which we are all more or less liable. In each and every case the explanation

may be found, as we have seen, in the principle that the mind is relieved, for the time being, from the tension which a highly-organised society has imposed upon us. What we laugh at is the unusual, the irregular, anything which gives us a moment's respite from the refined and the orderly.

The Spoonerism is a good example of the slip of the tongue, involving a comical mixture of ideas. Who could refrain from laughter, even amid the most solemn surroundings, upon hearing a minister of religion praying for his brother in these terms: "O Lord, fill him with fresh veal and new zigor"? Such slips have been made from time to time, and public speakers know something of the fear, which sometimes seizes them, lest a slip of the tongue should expose them to laughter. Or who could maintain himself with the dignity appropriate to a dinner-party if, when hearing the agreeable hostess, during dessert, ask a guest if he would have figs or grapes, the confused guest replied, "pigs fleas"?

Similarly, we laugh at people slipping, or losing their balance. To see a dignified, well-dressed man stumble in getting off a 'bus, to behold a trim, taut little man chasing his hat on a blustery day in March, to watch an irate old lady wildly gesticulating at an indifferent 'bus-man, who will not stop at her command, or to hear some one snore in church, laugh we must in such cases. It is not that we are lacking in sympathy; it is not that we consent to the situation in each case, but that, in such cases,

we see the triumph of the natural and the elemental over the correctitude and the refinements of civilised and social life.

4. In these days strain is inevitable in almost every walk of life. In the rush for success and achievement, in which we are all to some extent engaged, we are apt to take hold of too much of life at once. Foresight, application, and perseverance are good and necessary qualities, but we can make too much of them. The instrument may be tuned too high. The bow may be drawn too tight. Hence worry and anxiety, and that constant fretting of the spirit which issues in complaint, irritability, and bad temper.

Let us laugh, then, when and whenever we can, provided our laughter is at laughable things, and provided we do not break the laws of kindness and humanity. It is good for body and mind. It is, withal, one of the means of restoring that healthy human outlook which, in cases of nervous breakdown, is so frequently destroyed. We do not mean that one has to go through life perpetually guffawing and giggling. Life is too big a thing for that. We do mean, however, that we should keep the heart in warm living sympathy with reality, and that we should see men and things in something like true proportion.

We have it on the authority of Carlyle that "true humour is sensibility in the most catholic and deepest sense. True humour springs not more from the head

than the heart; it is not contempt; its essence is love. It is a sort of inverse sublimity, exalting, as it were, into our affections what is below us, while sublimity draws down into our affections what is above us."

Hence it is that the greatest amongst us can laugh, even when they are under the domination of the solemn and the sublime. Indeed, one of the lessons of biography is this, that a sense of sadness is not incompatible with a sense of the humour of things. Laughter and sorrow often go together, the one correcting the other, and each bearing testimony to the discord and music of life.

It is notorious that the envious, the base, and the malevolent rarely laugh. Laughter is generous and true-hearted, and mostly indicates a good soul devoid of vanity. It is associated with joy and gladness. It is at home in the free air of company, and it flourishes in the sunlight of good-fellowship and faith.

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you:
Weep, and you weep alone:
For the sad old earth
Must borrow its mirth,
It has trouble enough of its own."—

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

5. But now, is it possible to give practical counsels to the special class with whom we are dealing, and who find it difficult to accept the doctrine of laughter we have been expounding? Can laughter be cultivated? Is it possible to induce laughter to enter from without when its natural avenues are,

for the time being, blocked up? Undoubtedly, it is possible. For, be it remembered, the difficulty of laughter, in the special class with whom we are dealing, is often not moral but chiefly physical.

We submit therefore the following suggestions, being convinced from experience that they will be found to be of practical value:—

(*a*) Do not inhibit or resist the natural tendency to smile or laugh at amusing things. In nerve trouble there is often present a stolid reserve, which keeps the mind in bearing reins, and which refuses to give it its head. There is present a feeling that laughter is inconsistent with the gloom and depression under which they are labouring. Such people do not want to appear to be cheerful, when they really are the reverse. This is natural enough, under the circumstances. But one should remind himself that there is mostly no real reason why one should not laugh, since the course of one's gloom is usually not such as merits censure or blame.

Let the mind go, therefore, in the presence of fun, or wit, or humorous situations and persons. Don't let any feeling of dignity or superiority hinder you from smiling or even laughing at the ridiculous and the nonsensical. Ultimately, this means sympathy, and sympathy is very largely the essence of humour. Laughter is a great social solvent, and it is as one's feelings and thoughts are dissolved in the warm atmosphere of merry company that the gloom lifts, and one's spirit is set free.

(*b*) It is a great achievement, especially in those under consideration, to be able to laugh at oneself. None find this more difficult than those who are victims to nerves. Mostly, they take themselves very seriously, and it is asking much of them to smile at themselves. Their self-consciousness and their sense of inferiority are often so intense that to smile or laugh at themselves looks like aggravating the very ills from which they suffer. And yet it is possible and desirable.

In one of his moments of inspiration Burns exclaimed—

> "O wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us!"

It is as rare as it is salutary. Commonly the people we are dealing with look, as George Eliot would say, "as happy as wet chickens." If they could see themselves as the normally healthy man sees them, they could scarce forbear a smile. We recall a case in which the victim would look at himself in a mirror, during his blackest moods. Seeing there his drawn features, and his sad eyes, and reflecting that there was no solid reason for his gloom, his face would break into a broad smile, and, temporarily at least, he became himself again.

(*c*) One of the best occasions for mirth is surely during mealtimes. Table talk ought to flow freely and graciously, and the salt of much of such talk may well be the salt of merriment and good cheer.

If for no other reason, laughter at meals is good, because it is an excellent digestive. It means leisureliness, and so corrects the serious fault of bolting one's food. It does much also to facilitate the working of the salivary glands, and so aids mastication and the swallowing of one's food. Add to this the fact that mirth, at table, is a great leveller and a great socialising and uniting influence, and we see how immensely important it is as a corrective of the evils with which we are dealing.

(*d*) It is helpful also to visit occasionally places of entertainment, where a hearty laugh is sure to be found. To see and hear Harry Lauder sing, "I love a lassie," is a revelation of how one laughter-loving human being can open the flood-gates of another's mind, and let in the warm healing tide of good temper and natural delight. To feel superior to such pastimes is to narrow one's healthy sympathies. To dismiss them, as waste of time, is often to be ignorant of some of the best uses of leisure.

Moreover, it is good not only to laugh, but to laugh in company with many others. The "loud laughter" which punctuates a public speech or address is due not solely to the point which is made, or to the story which is told. Its explanation is partly found in what is called the psychology of the crowd. If the politician's joke, or smart repartee, were made in private it would lose part of its spice; but being addressed to the general public it evokes "loud laughter." It is a wholesome thing, there-

fore, to laugh with others in public. It is especially good for those with whom we are dealing, since it keeps them in touch with their kind, and warms the currents of heart and mind.

(*e*) Lastly, we strongly recommend, for the special ends we have in view, the reading of humorous and laughter-provoking literature. It is especially good to read such books aloud. In this way, you share your mirth and, in sharing it, it becomes doubly yours.

Personally, we have found that the most provocative are the American writers, though Jerome K. Jerome in "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow," and in "Three Men in a Boat," is one of the most laughter-provoking of men. W. W. Jacobs also is very good. Of course, we are not now dealing with humorous writers in general, of whom we have many, and of the best. We are speaking particularly of that class of book which is best calculated to call forth full-throated laughter, and in this class American humorists occupy a foremost place.

Chief among these are Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, and Bret Harte. To those who, hitherto, have a prejudice against, or a disinclination towards, the grotesque, these writers may not appeal. But by those who can see and feel that the apparent irreverence and lack of refinement of such writers is only on the surface, they will be heartily welcomed and thoroughly enjoyed. Let the victim to nerves read aloud, reading with insight and relish: "The

Roman Guide," "Speech on the Babies," "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," and the "Ascent of the Rigi," and if he cannot laugh and laugh heartily, it will not be the fault of Mark Twain.

Artemus Ward has a flavour all his own, rough maybe, but extremely stimulating. Among his best known and most laughable sketches are "The Shakers," "The Showman's Courtship," and "Little Patti"; whilst his chief works are "Travels among the Mormons" and his "Life in London." Exaggeration is largely the medium in which he worked. Curious, too, are the ridiculously odd liberties he takes with the English language, sometimes spelling words simply by means of their sounds, and sometimes making certain figures stand for the part or whole of a word. The following, a description of the prima donna, Madame Patti, is a sample of his method, and is in his best vein:—

"When she smiles, the awjince feels like axing her to doo it sum moor, and to continuer doin it, 2 a indefinite extent. . . . But Miss Patti orter sing in the Inglish tung. As she kin do so as well as she kin in Italyun, why under the son don't she do it? What cents is thare in singing wurds nobody don't understan when wurds we do understan, is jest as handy? Why people will versifferously applaud furrin languige is a mistery."

Bret Harte also has many admirers. His stories, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," etc., are marvels in their way, and, for strength and originality, much

of his poetry is remarkable. One of the best known of these is "The Heathen Chinee," beginning—

> "Which I wish to remark,
> And my language is plain,
> That for ways that are dark
> And for tricks that are vain,
> The Heathen Chinee is peculiar,
> Which the same I would rise to explain."

Then, a never-failing means of provoking real laughter is "Helen's Babies," by a charming writer, John Habberton. This wonderful, exaggerated perhaps, analysis and description of the child mind, was written to amuse a sickly wife; and as, no doubt, it achieved its immediate object, so it has cheered and amused multitudes since, on both sides of the Atlantic, far beyond the hopes of its big-hearted composer.

And so, we conclude this chapter on laughter. Our aim has been to show what laughter is, and what a helpful place it has in the lives of those who are suffering from nervous breakdown. The trouble, in such cases, is that they have become self-centred. The great need is to give such people interests outside and beyond themselves, to re-unite them to the world of men and things from which they have become temporarily divorced. Laughter is one of the best means of doing this, and by any legitimate means it should be persistently and consistently employed.

The Solemn-Coated Throng

"All the daytime I belong
To the solemn-coated throng
Who with grave, stupendous looks
Study cash and ledger books,
Or who go,
Staid and slow,
On sad business to and fro.

But when twilight comes, I range
Over topics new and strange,
Wasting all my leisure hours
On fay birds and fantom flowers,
Or I sing
Some mad fling
Thru the impish evening.

Yes, and when the moon goes by
Rocking in a foamy sky,
Then I swear I'm more akin
To the laughing Cherubin
Than to those grave men who go,
To and fro, to and fro,
On sad business to and fro."

By George Rostrevor in "Escape and Fantasy."

CHAPTER XVI

THE WILL AND THE WAY

It is comparatively easy to point out the way to the desired end. The more difficult thing is to show how the power necessary for the undertaking and achievement of the end is to be generated. It is not knowledge, or even advice, that we usually need so much as executive force or will-power.

Now, in serious nerve trouble, this executive power, as well as the other faculties of the mind, has become impaired. Mental effort is made with difficulty. The mind generally is supine and inert. It cannot think aright because it cannot concentrate, and it cannot feel aright because the emotions are largely beyond control. Will-power is conditioned by vigorous and sustained thought, along with healthy and sustained emotion, the thought and the emotion being in due proportions and right relations. If these conditions are not present, the will cannot function in definite and decisive action.

Unfortunately, those to whom these pages are especially addressed are more or less in the condition of St. Paul when he said, "to will is present with me, but how to perform I find not." That is to say,

the desire to rise up and act is present to some extent, but the actual power needed to do so is absent. Our aim, at present, therefore, is to suggest ways and means by which the will may be developed and strengthened; for, until this is done, much else will remain undone.

A moment's reflection will convince us that lack of will-power, or failure to do, or not to do things, is often due to want of deliberate and intelligent practice. Frequently, and in a general way, we act as if will-power came without much thought or training. It is not so. The golfer who simply does his best each time he plays, regardless of the rules or art of golf, can hardly expect to become even a respectable player. Similarly, to hope to attain skill in the use of the will without attending to the laws which condition its proper use is, generally, and especially in those suffering from nerve trouble, too much to expect.

In a general way, our wills are trained without our being aware of the process of training. Will-power comes to us, in a measure, in the home, in school, and by means of religion and the ordinary discipline of life. But in each case, the training has been more or less indirect and unconscious. We have not been taught what the will is, and how it exerts itself in reasoned action.

It may be well, therefore, before offering definite suggestions for developing and strengthening the will, to say something as to the nature of the will.

It is commonly admitted to-day that the mind exhibits itself in three ways, in feeling, in thought and in will. Not that there is ever feeling without thought, or thought without an element of feeling, or will in which there is no feeling and no thought. No, the mind is a unity, but a unity which manifests itself so that sometimes feeling predominates, sometimes thought, and sometimes will.

What we wish to impress upon those for whom we are especially writing is this, that will-power is, to a large extent, the result of feeling and thought existing in right proportions and right relations. This is so true that the following principle may be deduced, viz.: "right feeling and right thinking lead to right willing." Once this principle is grasped, we have gone a long way towards understanding what will-power is, and how it issues in deed and conduct. It is the harmonious working of these three phases of the mind which is the ideal, and experience proves that, where feeling and thought are, each in turn, both strong and truly related, there the will functions in character, which has been defined as a "completely fashioned will."

There are some minds which think so much that they never get started along the road of action. Coleridge, it is said, talked like an angel, but did nothing. Intellect and brains are, of course, essential as the works of a watch are, but, without feeling, without ambition, for example, brains are as ineffectual as the most beautiful watch which lacks

a mainspring. On the other hand, our feelings are often cold because our knowledge is narrow and stale. Without the play of thought and meditation, feeling is apt to fizzle out, and the will languishes almost before it has come to birth.

It must not be forgotten, however, that our emotions occupy a primary place in our lives. "All action," says the author of "The Culture of Personality," "can be traced back ultimately to the primary impulse or feeling. What we do depends upon our desires, either controlled and transformed, or else accentuated and hastened by our thoughts." This is both religion and psychology. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," we read, "for out of it are the issues of life."

> "Still through the paltry stir and strife
> Glows down the wished Ideal,
> And longing moulds in clay what Life
> Carves in the marble Real;
> To let the new life in, we know,
> Desire must ope the portal:
> Perhaps the longing to be so
> Helps make the soul immortal."—J. R. Lowell.

To those, therefore, who are the victims of nervous breakdown, nothing is more important than that they should guard well their emotions. This is largely their specific trouble, that their feelings have got out of hand. They are the creatures of their moods, their impulses, their fears and their desires. They are often the prey of anger, lust, envy and pride! They are the sport of grief, regret,

discouragement, and disappointment, and hence their anxiety, worry and despair. Add to these their sense of self-condemnation, their self-abasement and shame, and we realise somewhat to what depths the soul descends when the realm of emotion is in chaos and disorder. As long as our emotions run riot and we are the victims of our feelings, so long is the will enfeebled, and we cannot do and be what we know we ought to do and be.

The corrective for all this is thought and reason. We must quietly and deliberately supplant these weeds of the mind by cultivating in their place the flowers of pure and wholesome emotions. We must occupy the heart with love and affection, with kindness, gentleness, sympathy, courage, patience, hope and trust.

Having said so much about the nature of the will we are the better able to make definite and practical suggestions as to how we should proceed in order to develop and strengthen it.

(1) It must be kept steadily in mind, from the very outset, that there is in us a power which is superior even to the will. Call that power "personality" or the "oversoul" or the "ego" or what you will, there it is. The greatest thing, in each of us, is neither thought nor emotion, not even action, which is applied will-power, but the "self," the "I." It is this which is the sovereign power, and which, through all the years of our conscious being, is the fundamental element in each human life.

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."—W. E. Henley.

It is a good and bracing thing, therefore, to bring our conduct occasionally to the bar of this "ego" of ours. When we have done something contrary to our desires or inclinations, when we have resisted this impulse or conquered that desire, we should remind ourselves that it is the "I," the controller of our lives, who has done it. When we thus stop and tell ourselves that there is such a guiding "oversoul" in us, we are doing much to reinforce the majesty of the will, and to impress upon it the imperative of that over-lordship which is the prerogative of human personality.

All through life, this controlling entity has held the reins, unifying and relating all our experience, and so making our lives a connected and continuous whole. All through our lives this same wonderful power, the power which says "I ought," "I can," "I will," this "self," which looks on when we think, which is at hand when we feel, and which approves or disapproves when we decide or not—all the time, this lord of our lives is nearer to us than our breathing, and may be the arbiter of all our doings.

Believe then in your "self," in that presiding and unifying power within, which lives behind all your thinking and feeling and doing. Trust in it. Reverence it. Thus you will come upon part, at least,

of the secret of how to rise up and do the things you ought to do, and leave undone the things you ought to leave undone. For be assured that—

> "Not fortune's slave is man; our state
> Enjoins, while firm resolves await
> On wishes just and wise,
> That strenuous action follow both,
> And life be one perpetual growth
> Of heavenward enterprise."—WORDSWORTH.

(2) On its practical side, the first step necessary in the development and cultivation of the will, is the act of attending. To attend is almost the simplest effort the will can make, and it is well always to begin with simple things, before attempting those which are more complex. Begin here, then. Each time you attend, each time you notice carefully, you are practising the first of the exercises necessary for the development of will-power.

Butler says that "the most important intellectual habit that I know of is the habit of attending exclusively to the matter in hand." It is important because, by strictly attending, we are breaking in the will, and so initiating the process of building up will-power. It is doing first things first; which, like all first attempts, is not as easy as it seems.

But how shall we begin? Begin with the next thing. You are sitting in your garden. A missel-thrush is singing in a neighbouring tree. His many phrases are whistled to perfection. Keep your mind upon the notes of his song. Listen attentively to

each phrase in his treasury of melody. Mark the number and variety of his notes and the order in which they follow each other. Listen until you can tell wherein its song differs from that of the blackbird.

Or you are walking along the side walk in the street. Determine that you will notice carefully the expression upon the faces of those whom you meet. Do this so thoroughly that, having observed twenty faces, you can classify them as happy or sad, as intelligent or unintelligent, as animated or placid. The mind will soon show signs of wandering. But keep it at the task you have set it. Bring it back again and again until your task has been fairly well done.

(3) It is also a good exercise for the will to read so many pages in a book, such as Green's "History of the English People." In spite of interruptions and noises, keep the mind upon the subject-matter, grasping each idea in turn, and retaining in the mind the general content of the text. In cases where there is nerve trouble, let the book chosen be of a simple character. The important thing is that the ideas are clearly perceived, and that they are so linked up in the mind that the reader is able, at the end of the exercise, to give a clear account of what he has read.

(4) Further, it is a good plan to force oneself, a little each day, to read up some subject which is somewhat dry and hard. Too much should not be attempted at one time. It needs considerable will-

power also to read through a great work like Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." We once met a man who declared that he did this once a year, and that he did it for the sake of the mental control it involved. We do not advise an exactly similar regime, for those whom we are especially addressing, but we do think that the principle is good, and that to force oneself to such a course of continuous reading is excellent as a means of developing and strengthening the will.

It is needless to add further examples of the kind of exercise necessary for bracing and strengthening the will. Those requiring such discipline can easily devise exercises for themselves. It matters little what they are so long as the will is persistently called upon to keep the mind at its appointed task. Simple exercises should be attempted first, more difficult ones being selected as the power of concentration grows and as the will gains in ascendancy over the roving disposition of the mind. In any case, attention is the watchword, for attention is the first step in the direction of winning that sovereign power of which the poet has said—

> "O well for him whose will is strong,
> He suffers but he will not suffer long."

(5) Much may be said also for the practice of forcing oneself to do things, occasionally, which are disagreeable and opposed to one's natural inclinations. Many things confront us, from day to day,

which are irksome or uncongenial. It will be admitted, for example, by those whom we especially have in mind, that strong likes and dislikes are among the distinctive marks of their peculiar condition. These likes and dislikes are often so positive and so violent as to pass beyond the bounds of reason. It is a healthy exercise, therefore, to check these dispositions, to force oneself to see what is likeable in persons and situations which we instinctively dislike and, generally, to curb our prejudices and predispositions.

Similarly, we should compel ourselves, now and then, to perform tasks which are irksome and distasteful, and spur ourselves on in directions contrary to our desires and inclinations. By such methods the steeds of the mind are kept in hand and the will becomes increasingly the directing power of one's life. For example, a letter long due has not been written. Day after day we put it off on the plea that letter-writing is distasteful to us. Do it at once, and do it, if for no other reason than this, that, in confronting and denying your disinclination, you are reinforcing your power of self-control and so increasing your stock of will-power. Every time you do a thing you dislike doing you are proving to yourself that you are master in your own house, and you are fashioning and fitting to your life that rudder, the will, without the easy and effective working of which you are the sport of every wind that blows.

(6) The forming and keeping of good resolutions are not to be despised as a means of training and strengthening the will. To form a good resolution is to put oneself on his honour, it is a mortgaging of the will, and a making of commitments on the future and, as such, it is a most practical exercise in self-control. Moreover, the serious making of resolutions is a means of generating hope. Out of a fresh start, a new call upon the will, hope is born again, and hope and faith are among the most stimulating energies of the mind.

Many are afraid to make resolutions lest they may fail to keep them; but better fail in keeping good resolutions, if we do our best, than not fail because we have not tried. The man who climbs and fails silently, and in good spirits, has not done a vain thing. As Lewis Morris says—

> "I do not blame
> Phœbus or Nature which has set his bar
> Betwixt success and failure, for I know
> How far high failure overleaps the bounds
> Of low success."

(7) Further, we must watch and check our impulses. Many of our impulsive acts are excellent. Many, however, are bad in themselves, and indicate a feeble will. In cases where the nervous system is upset, action is apt to take place before the mind has time to get control. The brain under such conditions is in a state of unstable equilibrium, and action takes place as a result of the slightest movement in the nerve currents. Hence it is that the hasty word is

spoken, the rash act is committed, and we find ourselves plunged into anger and anguish, almost before we have realised what has taken place.

How often we hear the confession made: "I never gave it a thought or I would not have said it"; or, "I did it on the impulse of the moment." Many of the bitterest moments in the lives of those with whom we are especially dealing are due to their being victims of their impulses. They act first and think after. They are carried away by their emotions. In short, they lack directive force. Their need is balance, and this can only be attained by the habit of deliberation.

Now, deliberation can be acquired even by those having the most volcanic temperament. It is largely a matter of practice and habit. When you find yourself acting or speaking straight from your feelings, stop and think. Look before you leap. See both sides, and all sides, before you act or decide. Remember that you will always think, speak, act, and look as you feel. Feeling, therefore, must be confirmed or corrected by thought, or the will cannot function in a healthy and consistent manner. It is not that your feelings or impulses are necessarily wrong. Indeed, they are mostly right, and spring up from the fount of your essential manhood. Still, we should not be ruled, even by our best feelings or our most generous impulses. We should rule ourselves. "Mightier is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

(8) Much may be done to develop and strengthen the will also by taking a keen moral interest in men and things. If our tasks are to be carried through thoroughly and to the end we must have a high purpose; we must be under the compulsion of the spirit; we must have vision, and so we able—

"To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower."

The will often flags and fails because the mind does not find meaning in the meaningless, because we have not the vision necessary to see beauty in the ugly, and to detect the unusual in the usual. Where also there is no compelling reason for doing or being, the will is supine and the mind is unable either to see the imperative or to do its behests when it has seen it. Strive, therefore, to see life with all its moral and spiritual significance. Remember that there may be moral value in all we do. Everything we are called upon to do, in the routine of our every-day life even, has a moral urgency, and common things may be done in such a spirit, and with such an outlook, as to redeem them from the humdrum and the irksome. It is as one hears the voice divine, behind the call of duty, that the will is invigorated, and we resist and achieve in spite of difficulties and hindrances. As Kipling finely says—

"We were dreamers, dreaming greatly in the man-stifled town,
We yearned beyond the sky line, where the strange roads go down;

Came the whisper, came the vision, came Power with the need,
Till the soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead."

DON'TS

1. Don't forget that the will is the measure of the man.

2. Don't say "I can't." Say "I can." To believe in your potential power is to increase and enrich it.

3. Don't be the servant of your impulses. Make them serve you.

4. Don't act first and think after. Look before you leap.

5. Don't fight your weaknesses by frontal attacks. Crowd out the evil with the good.

6. Don't run into temptation. When exposed, face it in confidence and self-respect.

7. Don't put off till to-morrow what should be done to-day. Do it now. To-morrow it may be more difficult.

8. Don't forget that a good habit is a support to the will, and that a bad one enslaves it.

9. Don't do things because you must, but because you ought. And don't forget that to try is always worth while.

CHAPTER XVII

SELF-SUGGESTION

As we have seen in previous chapters, those suffering from nervous breakdown are seriously and even painfully impressionable. From all quarters the mind is invaded by an endless flow of impressions, and, lacking the power of control, it becomes the victim of those emotional storms which sweep over it, from time to time. This is largely the explanation of those fears and anxieties, those worries and feelings of malaise, to which we have often referred.

Impressionable people, such as those with whom we are dealing, are especially open to suggestion, and we are convinced that there are, for such, boundless possibilities in the daily practice of self-suggestion.

What, then, is self-suggestion? It has been well defined by Edwin Ash, M.D., in his capital little book on "Mental Self-Help," as "the process of impressing the mind with a new idea, or of strengthening a mental impression that is too weak to be of any functional importance." It is necessary to make it quite clear what is meant by self-suggestion, since unthinking people are inclined to look upon the

idea as a species of self-deception. It is, of course, nothing of the kind. It is strictly psychological and, therefore, eminently reasonable.

A little reflection will convince us that suggestion, generally speaking, is a power to which all of us are more or less subject, every day of our lives. Unconsciously, by means of it, the mind is kept in motion; feeling, thought, and will, being stimulated and directed thereby, in innumerable ways. The shop window is cunningly set out in order to suggest, to all and sundry, that they should purchase this article or that.

Suggestion also plays a large part in politics, art, and religion. The political speech is a deliberate attempt to suggest certain lines of political action. The painting, the statue, and the symphony, each is often designed to impress the mind in such a way as shall lead to new ideas and ideals. Even religion, both in its content and expression, is an impressive illustration of the influence and power of suggestion. The cathedral service, with it liturgical forms, its prayers and music, its vaulted roof—

> "And storied windows, richly dight
> Casting a dim religious light"—

these, along with the living human appeal, are but forms of suggestion, having as their aim the disposing of the mind towards the highest and the holiest.

If, therefore, suggestion plays such a large and important part in our general and every-day expe-

rience, it is reasonable to conclude that, if consciously, personally, and deliberately applied and directed, it may be one of the most helpful and recreative forces in life.

Speaking of specific troubles, Dr. Ash, who is a psychologist as well as a physician, says, "suggestion will act as balm to the jaded worker on the threshold of a serious mental breakdown, by giving him sleep, soothing the tired nerves, and restoring his confidence in himself." Most physicians will admit the value of self-suggestion, in the treatment of ailments which are associated with highly-strung and emotional temperaments. Often they encourage self-suggestion, inducing their patients to hope and believe even when there seem small grounds for so doing. They do so because they know that the mind acts directly upon the body, as the body does upon the mind, and that the mind may act, in a positive and curative way, under the stimulus of faith and hope.

The principle of self-suggestion is based upon the persistent repetition of an idea which points definitely towards healing and help; for, as Lévy says, "every idea accepted by the brain tends to become an action." Not only so, such ideas vitally affect the movements of the sub-conscious mind, giving it power and direction, and so acting favourably upon the nervous system and body generally.

At present little is known as to the workings of our subconscious mental life. But we do know that

an idea constantly repeated, in the conscious mind, tends to react upon and stimulate the movements of our subconscious being. For example, when we are not in the best of health if we keep telling ourselves that we are ill, and if, in addition, we take up the attitude of the sick person, coddling and pitying ourselves, taking medicines, and assuring our friends that we are ill, we positive lower our physical tone, until we actually become ill.

It is also well known that a person taking injections of morphia, for sleeplessness, will sleep after a plain injection of water, provided he does not know that the latter has been substituted for the former, so potent are thought and imagination, not only over the body but even over the judgment and the reason. And so, we might continue citing cases in which the mind is seen to act definitely upon, and sometimes prejudicially against, the body. One might quote instances to prove that cold, hunger, and exposure do not affect the victorious as they do the beaten soldier; that people, generally, are more liable to chills and colds when they are depressed than when they are not; and that grief, worry, or fear operate, not only in the direction of the impoverishment of the nervous system, but also in the direction of disorders in the bodily organs themselves.

On its practical side, self-suggestion is simply an attempt to get control over our minds and bodies, by seeking to direct what is sometimes called the

"back of our minds." The more we think about it the more we see that the secret of a happy life, either physically or mentally, is control; control of the feelings, the thoughts, and the actions. As the mainspring of one's life is thought, every effort should be made to direct it. Suggestion is such an attempt. It aims at doing, in the subconscious mind, what can be done by deliberation and reason in our conscious experience.

Few of us realise what an enormous influence our thoughts have upon our health. A large amount of our happiness or misery may be traced to our thoughts; and many of us are tensed and anxious and overwrought, not because we are overworked, but because we have allowed innumerable unhealthy thoughts to root themselves in the mind, as weeds infest our gardens, from we know not where.

These thoughts, like weeds, choke up the stuff of the mind and, like weeds, they become rank and poisonous, disfiguring and marring what might otherwise be beautiful and fair. Our fears, our apprehensions, our worries, and anxieties are often nothing more than the uprising, from our subconscious selves, of thoughts and imaginations which we, in the first place, permitted to enter our conscious experience. Self-suggestion is one of the best means of crowding these weed-thoughts out of the mind, by introducing, through the conscious mind, other healthier and positive thoughts.

If intelligently and persistently practised, it will do much to—

> "Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And, as some sweet oblivious antidote,
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart."

Let us look, then, at some of the leading characteristics of the minds of those in bondage to "nerves." Let us see in what way self-suggestion may be used to relieve, if not remove, those "troubles of the brain" which weigh so heavily on the lives of those with whom we are specially dealing.

Take first the matter of excessive fatigue which is so commonly found in cases of nervous breakdown. How may self-suggestion be applied so as to alleviate, if not overcome, this distressing malady? The first thing to do is to face it; to ask ourselves how it has come about. When we do so, we shall find that, apart from physical causes, it is often due to mental depression. That depression acts directly upon the body, making it languid and inert, is beyond dispute. Just as bad news relaxes the very muscles of the body, so good news braces and vitalises them. This mental cause, then, must be removed, and it may often be done by means of suggestion.

For example, instead of submitting to dark thoughts and nameless fears, let us bring into the mind bright thoughts and a hopeful outlook. One thought can expel another. As sunshine scatters

the gloom, so sunny thoughts and cheerful feelings can dispel the spectres of the mind. In proportion as this is done it will be found that new elasticity will take hold of the body, and fatigue will be alleviated, if not displaced. Further, imagine or picture the buoyant state. Recall those periods when to walk and run were a delight. Feel strong. When you stand up, do it with every muscle of the body. When you walk, or when you lie down, let it be done with decision and force. Don't lounge and loll about, but let your movements be the outward signs of inward health and delight.

Then, take the symptom of irritability, which is also commonly present in nerve troubles. Frequently it rises with us, in the morning, and accompanies us throughout the day. It is hard to begin the day with the "morning face," and so difficult to be calm and confident in the presence of the trivial round and the common task.

But why are we irritable? When we ask ourselves that question, and do our best to get at the root of the matter, it will often be found that this feeling of irritability has certain definite causes over and above any lowness of nervous tone that may be present. We may sometimes trace it to some past experience, which keeps rising up from the subconscious mind. We have feared something, or we have been annoyed and been made angry. We have done something amiss, formed some harsh judgment, expressed some unwise thought, or given place

to some fear. In any case, these unfortunate experiences keep coming up to the surface of our conscious life, and hence our unhappiness and irritability.

Now, at such times, we must call upon that calm and repose of which there are ample reserves in all of us. We must dismiss the past, in so far as we cannot alter it. We must let the dead bury the dead, and seek to fill the mind with healthy and helpful thoughts. We must drive out the ashes of anger, and fear, and worry, by replacing them with thoughts and feelings which bring peace to the spirit. At such times we cannot do better than listen to such gentle, soothing words as those of the Buddha, "Put away bitterness of speech; abstain from harsh language; whatever word is human, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart, urbane, pleasing, and beloved of the people, such are the words to speak."

We have read somewhere of one of those old-time serving-maids, who added to her many good household qualities an acerbity of tongue which made her the terror of those from whom she differed. She had a kind heart withal, and was wont to excuse her outbursts of acidity by saying, "And if I am sharp on me outside I'm smooth enough on me inside." To which, her weeping victim replied, "It's a pity you can't wear yourself inside out, then." Most excellent advice!

In most of us, even in our most irritable moods,

there is a reserve of smoothness within. We must believe in our own inward calm. We must assert it, and give it expression, when we are outwardly ruffled. Not only so, it is well to picture the state of calm and poise, about which we know something, in spite of our momentary irritability. In short, we must "pull ourselves together," correcting our feelings with our thoughts, and directing both into channels of quietude and composure.

Remember also that, in our irritable moods, we are apt to do irreparable mischief to those whom we would not willingly hurt. So much evil is wrought in the world, not through want of heart, but through want of thought, and our irritable moods are often exceedingly thoughtless. As Moore touchingly puts it—

> "Alas! how light a cause may move
> Dissension between hearts that love!
> Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
> And sorrow but more closely tied,
> That stood the storm, when waves were rough,
> Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
> Like ships that have gone down at sea,
> When heaven was all tranquillity."

Along such lines as we have indicated, we know by experience, self-suggestion may be most successfully employed. By these means it is possible so to purge and enrich our sub-conscious life that irritability may be allayed, if not destroyed.

It is not necessary to enumerate all the various symptoms which harass and distress the minds of

that special class with whom we are dealing. Sleeplessness, the sense of inferiority, self-consciousness, lack of self-confidence, restlessness and the others, each and all of these may be treated by self-suggestion, by striving to implant, in the subconscious mind, thoughts and feelings of a positive and counteracting nature. The principle which must be applied is that of crowding out the evil by bringing in the good. The best means of doing this must be left to ourselves. The important thing is that we do not consent to any of these ills, but keep telling the mind, repeatedly and hopefully, that they need not exist, and to persevere in faith and hope until the healthy and normal state has been attained.

But now, it is no use making suggestions to ourselves listlessly and languidly. In telling ourselves that "we will" be this, and that "we will not" be that, in assuring ourselves that "we can" rise above this, and that "we can" overcome that, we must impress and convince ourselves as to what we intend to do or do not intend to do, as we would use every endeavour to convince our fellows as to our intentions.

For example, it is not enough to tell ourselves, when we cannot sleep, "I will sleep to-night. I feel sure I shall sleep." It is not enough to tell ourselves, when we are angry or irritated, "I will keep calm. I will keep myself in hand." It is not enough, when we are shy and nervous and lack self-confidence—it is not enough to say, "I will be mas-

ter of myself; I will keep myself under control." These affirmations should be repeated to oneself morning, noon, and night, and not merely at the particular time when their actual need arises. The suggestions, contained in these affirmations, must get hold of the mind. They must sink down into our subconscious life. They must become part and parcel of ourselves. It is only in this way that we may hope that they will influence body, mind, and spirit.

Then, when we repeat these suggesting affirmations, as we should persistently and methodically suggest them, we must do so calmly, slowly, distinctly, and emphatically. There must be conviction and intensity, not only in our hearts and minds, but in the very words themselves. Words are mightier than we imagine. They play a much larger part in our lives than we ever dream. They are living things, and do much to shape and direct our subconscious life. When a word sinks down into our unconscious being it germinates like a seed, and throws up thoughts and images, which do much to make or mar our happiness.

It is wise, therefore, to accustom ourselves to dwell thoughtfully upon certain words. We should repeat them calmly, deliberately, and positively. We should repeat them in such a way as to catch their music, and to be saturated with their meaning. Such words are, peace, harmony, serenity, kindness, faith, love, hope, goodwill, generosity, pa-

tience, contentment, forbearance, sympathy, unselfishness, gentleness, and the like. On the other hand, we should exclude from the mind such words as pride, envy, hatred, fear, revenge, anger, worry, failure, despair, depression, grief, and any words such as turn the mind in upon itself, giving it a bias along unhealthy directions.

Further, it is a good and helpful plan to make a list of phrases and short sentences, which suggest quiet and restful states of mind. These should be repeated from time to time, especially before retiring to rest. Such as the following are most helpful and suggestive: "Love casteth out all fear," "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace . . ." "Casting all your care upon Him," "Consider the lilies of the field," "The harvest of a quiet eye," "At leisure from oneself," "A quiet heart," "Be careful for nothing," and others which we meet in the course of our reading. If this is done, regularly and persistently, we are convinced that both our conscious and subconscious life will become enriched, and we shall be saved from those moods and fits of depression which haunt the minds of all those in bondage to a highly tensed nervous temperament.

Yet again, it will be found to be stimulating and steadying if we collect and repeat poetic phrases and sentences such as contain pictures and images which at once calm the mind and exercise the imaginative faculty. The following illustrate what we mean: "The lowing herd winds slowly o'er

the lea," "The bud on the bough," "Day is dying in the west," "The toils of day are over," "Our wearied eyelids close," "When morning gilds the skies," "The wind in the trees," "Mountain top and wooded dell," "Fierce raged the tempest o'er the deep," and many others. If these phrases and sentences are repeated quietly, emphatically, and with feeling, at the same time calling upon the mind to visualise the pictures they contain, much may be done to compose and dispose our thoughts and emotions. By such means we may do much to give calm and poise to the mind, which, in cases of nervous breakdown, is so often beset by those clouds and storms which are the results of derangement in the nervous organism.

The virtue of self-suggestion, as we have seen from what has been said, is that it disposes the mind to think health instead of illness. It tends to occupy the mind with the positive as opposed to the negative. It gives the mind a bias towards right and healthful directions. It develops a balanced outlook, and does much to free the mind from that lack of proportion to which so many of us are subject.

Why we should dwell more upon the dark and sombre side of things is hard to tell. That we are disposed to do so can scarcely be denied. We think more of our failures than our successes. We give more thought and emotion to our grey days than to our days of light and sunshine. We talk more

about our pains than about our healthy bodily delights. And, in these ways, we are constantly suggesting to our minds the very evils we deplore. Self-suggestion is the corrective of all this. By means of it we may draw upon our inward sources of help and strength. By building up a wall of self-suggestion we are confident that much may be done to give peace to the spirit, health to the body, and power to the will.

> "We are but farmers of ourselves, yet may,
> If we can stock ourselves and thrive, up-lay
> Much good treasure for the great rent day."

CHAPTER XVIII

WORK, INTEREST, AND HOBBIES

One of the dangers attending nerve trouble is that of invalidism. There is often present a tendency to give in to inertia and indifference. Responsibility is not welcomed. The serious business of life is apt to be postponed, if not shunned. Owing to the peculiar demands which are made upon the nerve forces, energy becomes spasmodic and unreliable, and, as a result, there is a lack of initiative and perseverance.

It is easy, therefore, for those whom we are addressing to drift into comfortable ways, to take the line of least resistance, and to settle down into invalidism. Their minds are so occupied with their weaknesses and failings, and they often feel so tired and used up, that effort and work make little or no appeal to them.

It is of supreme importance, then, that they should have some definite and suitable occupation, as soon as possible, after they have recovered themselves from the first stage of their trouble. It is fatal to throw oneself upon the sick list and to wait

for the return of normal health before taking up or returning to one's calling or profession.

Of course, in the early stage of the trouble, rest is not only necessary but imperative, if the nerve forces are to be replenished. The time must soon come, however, when a return to work is all-important, and when some clear and, as far as possible, alluring aim be set before us. Idleness aggravates the situation, since it throws the mind in upon itself, ministering to the very ills it is so desirable to remove. To be pleasurably occupied is to keep worry, care, and anxiety at arm's length. Time has a fleeting wing also when one's days are usefully spent, and no time hangs so heavily as that with which we know not what to do. The busy man, moreover, has little room for brooding and fretfulness—

> "From toil he wins his spirit's light,
> From busy day the peaceful night:
> Rich, from the very want of wealth,
> In Heaven's best treasures, peace and health."

Then, one of the chief uses of work, for the man whom we are especially considering, is that it gives him a sense of comradeship, and so tends to create in him a balanced and healthy outlook. In most callings, also, regularity, punctuality, attention, concentration, and reliability are essentials. And these are precisely the forms of discipline which he needs. Instead of yielding to the plea, "I will get back to work when I am better," the victim to nerves

should sooner or later tell himself, "I shall get better when I get back to work." We are convinced that a state of idleness is the worst thing possible, for, "in idleness alone," as Carlyle says, "is there perpetual despair."

Further, work gives us a sense of the right to rest, a most important point for the class in mind. Quite frequently it is found that unstrung, overwrought men and women are those who, whilst they drift and wait upon events, are at pains to justify their inactivity. They know that they ought to be, and can be, up and doing, and so they must needs defend themselves against the possible charge of idleness. Work, therefore, acts upon them as a moral tonic, enabling them to enjoy, to the full, the rest which has been earned.

> "They know, who work not they who play,
> If rest is sweet."

But now, to those suffering from nervous breakdown, it is vital that the work in which they are employed should be interesting. For many of us the question of interest is a serious problem. The choice of our vocation has usually to be made early in life and, even then, it is often a choice made for us rather than by us. The result is that, not infrequently, we find ourselves in pursuits which, to say nothing of our temperament, are not naturally suited either to our physical strength or our abilities.

Under a more perfect system of national education, it would seem essential that an important

place should be given to some method of testing our boys and girls, upon leaving school, as to the kind of vocation they may be best fitted for. In the meantime, multitudes, lacking such a vocational test at the beginning of their career, find themselves in callings and positions for which they were never meant. Thus, under the wear and tear of unsuitable and uncongenial occupations, they eventually break down, becoming victims to those nervous disorders which we are at present considering.

Not infrequently, the complaint of highly strung and temperamental people is either that they have lost interest in their work, or that the work itself is not interesting. It is often in the ranks of this class that nervous troubles reveal themselves. Lacking interest in what they are doing the mind becomes depressed, and, their attention being diverted from their occupation, they become self-conscious and introspective.

Is it possible to generate interest in the lives of such? Is it possible to redeem the common-place, and to find zest and even pleasure in callings and positions which apparently are not interesting? We believe it is possible. Indeed, if it were not, then, for large numbers of us, some of the common causes of nervous trouble must remain. Without interest, we become drudges, and drudgery clouds the mind and saps the nervous forces as few evils can.

How, then, is it possible to create and maintain interest in our daily tasks? In some callings there

is little difficulty, as the kind of work involved appeals naturally to the mind, and is well within the limitations of the body. But even in such cases time and use tend to induce staleness, and interest may flag and fail. In all work, therefore, certain conditions must be present and maintained, if one's interest is to be keen and steady.

(*a*) The first condition is a measure of health. It is difficult to be interested in one's work for long, lacking a moderate amount of physical strength. The attention and concentration, involved in sustained interest, presume a certain degree of nervous and mental energy, and this is impossible when the body itself lacks spring and force. It is impossible to find pleasure or delight in tasks which make demands beyond our strength. In this respect some begin life handicapped at the very outset, but most of us have potential health, such as, if properly attended to, makes all the difference between indifference and interest.

(*b*) The second condition necessary for the creation and maintenance of interest is that, as far as possible, our labours should be directed along definite lines and towards definite ends. It is easy to see how in this way interest may be developed in the case of the professions and what is called skilled labour. To make and maintain a position as a lawyer or a musician, as a preacher or an actor, has behind it the stimulus of distinction, to say nothing of other values. The more difficult thing is to show

how interest can be stimulated in such callings as that of the civil servant and the bank clerk, callings in which there is of necessity much routine, and so a strong tendency to monotony.

It is something to keep in mind that, whatever one's calling is, it is the means at hand of earning one's living. That which enables us to live, which usefully fills up our time, and which engages all the powers of body and mind, cannot be a matter of indifference. It must have in it a certain amount of interest, and it can be found if we look for it.

(*c*) There are few, if any, callings which have in themselves an unfailing source of interest and pleasure. Sooner or later, we find that interest depends partly, at least, upon the spirit in which we do things. Why is it that play is so interesting and that work is so uninteresting? Is it not because in play we forget everything else, whilst in work we are frequently the victims of duty, and need, and care, and anxiety? "Work is activity for an end. Play is activity as an end." Hence it is that in the former there is bondage, whilst in the latter there is freedom. The more we can interpret work, therefore, in terms of play, the more interested we shall become, and the less shall we feel the strain and pressure of monotony, which does so much to kill the spirit, and to wear down the nervous forces.

(*d*) Much may also be done to stimulate interest by bringing to bear upon our work a high sense of duty, by doing things carefully and thoroughly,

and by looking for the rare and unusual in the ordinary and the commonplace. It is vision which redeems such work from the commonplace and monotony. Lacking a high motive, the mind tires and, almost before we realise it, we become time-servers and hirelings. And this applies to all callings, even the humblest and the least desirable. The important thing is that we do not become slaves, that we do things as in the presence of the Highest. Only in this way, we are convinced, can we continue to prosecute our life's tasks with patience, and with some measure of freshness and delight.

(*e*) Further, self-suggestion, as a means of generating interest, has a real place in this connection. Frequently it will be found that loss of interest and general slackness in one's work are traceable to some extent to the habit of depreciating one's vocation. It is easily possible to kill interest in what we are doing by dwelling upon its difficulties, its unattractiveness, and its monotony. No calling can long hold our attention and interest which has ceased to be regarded as important and worth while.

Instead of dwelling, therefore, upon the difficult and disagreeable side of our work, it is far better to keep reminding ourselves of those special advantages and attractions which are present, more or less, in all occupations. It is a capital corrective to magnify our position, to compare it favourably with that of others, and generally to realise its special advantages and attractiveness. In this way we give

the mind a healthy perspective, and so do much to relieve the nervous strain which is bound to ensue when one's work has lost something of its original appeal. After all, it is the mind that we bring to bear upon our work which makes all the difference. In the nature of things some vocations have more inherent interests than others. Still, if we do our best,

> "To set the cause above renown,
> To love the game beyond the prize,"

it is astonishing what interest may be found in the most obscure calling, and in the meanest task.

But now, interest is good in itself, apart from the power it has of redeeming our work from fret and monotony. It has a soothing and restoring influence upon the mind. Provided our interests do not make immoderate demands upon our energies, it relieves the mind and, by taking us out of ourselves, tends to ease and quiet the nervous system.

It must not be supposed, therefore, that interest is essential, for those with whom we are especially dealing, in their work only. Leisure is as necessary as toil, and the question of how to make the best use of our leisure becomes the more important as the social order tends to reduce the number of our working hours. The thing to be guarded against is boredom, and we can often be more easily bored in our leisure hours than in our hours of toil.

By common consent there is much virtue in rid-

ing a hobby, as, by this means, we create and maintain interest in our leisure hours. A hobby has been defined as a pursuit one follows with zeal and enthusiasm. The exact nature of the hobby chosen must be left to our own inclination and taste. For those whom we have particularly in mind, those hobbies are best which make a moderate demand upon the mental powers. Intellectual hobbies, however, must not be ridden too hard or, instead of relieving and refreshing, they enervate and depress the mind.

(*a*) One of the most obvious hobbies is that of reading. Of course, it is all-important that the victim to nerves should read the right kind of books. Books, like men and women, may depress the mind and cloud the spirit. For those whom we are especially addressing, the standard of a good book should be its power of elevating the mind and cheering the heart. Indeed, this is the office of every real book. "Literature," says Mr. Birrell, "exists to please, to lighten the burden of men's lives, to make them for a short while forget their sorrows and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, and their grim futures."

Some one has said of Robert Browning that the great virtue of his writings is that, in them, "he helps us up." That is a great service to have rendered the world. Let us choose, then, such books, whether they be prose or poetry, books which "help us up," which inspire and invigorate, which dispel

our doubts and fears, and kindle our hopes, so that, whatever our pastimes, reading will occupy a foremost place.

(*b*) For those whose tastes may not incline them towards much reading there are other indoor hobbies, such as music, drawing, carpentry, and a general interest in one's home. The writer can testify that drawing is one of the most refreshing hobbies to those who have in some measure the sense of form. It demands accuracy, detail, and just that amount of concentration which is necessary for the maintenance of a balanced and mental life.

Much also can be said for a box of carpenter's tools. There are many calls in the home for their use over and above the making of simple things for common convenience. There is real satisfaction in making something useful. Moreover, such work means a sense of achievement, which again does something at least to increase one's self-confidence and to develop the spirit of perseverance up to a definite point. Then, since the home counts for much to those who are suffering from strain and nervous disabilities, the beautifying of the home may be a delightful hobby. Much may be done to make it what our special needs demand, the House Beautiful, the spot in the world where there is quiet and rest and refreshment. The furniture, the pictures, the colourings, the arrangement, the general order and neatness; above all, the comfort and happiness of those about us. By giving our atten-

tion to these, and other things, we shall not only be enriching our dwelling-place, but we shall, at the same time, be doing much to steady and calm and establish our inner mental selves.

"God send us a little home,
To come back to, when we roam.

Low walls, and fluted tiles,
Wide windows, a view for miles.

Red firelight and deep chairs,
Small white beds upstairs—

Great talk in little nooks,
Dim colours, rows of books.

One picture on each wall,
Not many things at all.

God send us a little ground,
Tall trees standing round.

Homely flowers in brown sod,
Overhead, Thy stars, O God.

God bless, when winds blow,
Our home, and all we know."—FLORENCE BONE.

(*c*) For those of us who are naturally active, hobbies involving collecting and classifying specimens are excellent. Whether our taste turns in the direction of butterflies or moths, of beetles or plants, of old china or prints or stamps, in each and all great interest and wide knowledge are possible. One of the happiest men the writer ever met was one who had made, during years, a wonderful collection of beetles. The hobby was taken up to kill

time, but the result was plain for all to see, in a quiet mind, the sense of achievement, and in the mental discipline, which had been won after years of patient toil. Of course, there should be moderation in the riding of our hobbies. The moment they ride us, and we become their victims, and not their masters, we have abused and not used them.

(*d*) Last of all, there is gardening, which is, for those whom we have especially in mind, one of the healthiest of hobbies. It is to be recommended because it appeals to one's interest on so many grounds, keeps us in the open, and pleasurably engages the energies of both body and mind. The danger attending it is that, since it makes so many demands upon one's time and energy, it may tend to use up too much of our strength.

Apart from the exercise it entails, and the fresh air it brings to the lungs, it is a hobby which fills the heart with reverent thoughts, and which gives added charm and meaning to our homes. Moreover, it keeps us in the presence of Nature in her most intimate moods, and reminds us of the ultimate source of things. "In horticulture," says Dean Hole, in his delightful "Book about the Garden," "there is less rivalry, less jealousy than in other enterprises, because, first of all, the very practice of it tends to make men generous and wise, and because the arena is so large and the spheres of excellence so numerous that none need interfere with his neighbour, or insist on riding his hobby."

A garden may be looked at from at least two standpoints, that of utility and that of beauty. We are of opinion that there is much beauty in a kitchen garden, more than is generally supposed. But, for the sheer comfort and delight, the flower garden is refreshment *In Excelsis*. It is a delight even to recall the names of some of the favourites, names of plants which involve little cost, and which grow in the cottager's patch as generously as they do beside the lawns of the stately mansion.

It is pleasant even to read aloud a list like the following, and, as you read, to visualise something of the wealth of colour it implies: Phlox Drummondii, Iceland Poppies, Calceolarias, Antirrhinums, Pentstemons, Petunias, Lobelias, Campanulas, Salvias, Begonias, Fuchsias, Heliotropes, Hydrangeas, Grevilleas, and so on. It is a mental tonic to look carefully into the meaning of each of these names, as it is delightful discipline to be able to recall such names at will.

In these days, also, the scope for specialising in the flower world, and so intensifying our interest and pleasure, is considerable. In the beautiful realm of roses much has been done in this respect, many charming favourites being the result, the very names of which it is refreshing to repeat. What's in a name? A rose, by any other name, would doubtless smell as sweet. Still, some of its sweetness is derived from the beauty of its name: Belle Lyonnaise, Gloire de Dijon, L'Ideal, Maréchal Niel,

Etoile de Lyon, Grace Darling, the Bride, Sunset, to say nothing of Catherine Mermet, Jean Ducher, and Marie Van Houtte, and many others; to be familiar with these, and to have at our easy recall the special beauties they connote, is to have sight, healing, and riches of the mind, a never-failing source of benediction and delight.

It may be asked what all this has to do with our subject? Our answer is that the people with whom we are dealing depend very much upon their environment. Nothing for them is more important than that they should respond to their surroundings in a joyous and positive way. In so far as their work, interests, and hobbies enable them to do this, they can rise above their special weaknesses and disabilities.

The all-important thing for these people is, by all and every legitimate means, to recover their normal relationships, to get back into life, and to take their proper place in the midst of their fellows. For them, especially, to retire from the fight is suicidal. Having once suffered from nervous strain or breakdown, and learnt their lesson, they should put the past behind them, make a fresh start, and henceforth keep well within their limitations. Moreover, they should persistently believe in their own recovery. They should act upon the assumption that their breakdown is but an interlude, and that, given time and patience, Nature will eventually and successfully reassert herself.

CHAPTER XIX

MUSIC AND THE EMOTIONS

THE more the nature and workings of the human mind are explored and understood, the more we shall realise, we are convinced, that music has a far deeper meaning and value than is generally supposed. The popular notion is that music is almost entirely a means of amusement and relaxation. It is not generally realised that it may play an important part in reorganising the mental faculties and enabling the mind to function in a healthy and balanced manner.

The ancients were wiser than we are in this respect. So strongly did they believe in the practical values of music that they gave it a foremost place in their national education. "Music," said Plato, "is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order, and leads to all that is good, just, and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but, nevertheless, dazzling, passionate, and eternal form." No wonder, therefore, that, in his ideal

republic, this philosopher gave music a real and important place.

But our immediate concern is not to urge the value of music as a general means of culture and refinement. It is to show how music may be used as a means of stimulating, restoring and pacifying the minds of those who are the victims of nervous disorders. We believe that, psychologically, music can be demonstrated to be of great value to this special class. Common experience also goes far to support the view that music has a strange and subtle power over the human mind, especially when the mind is labouring under stress or depression or excitement.

During the late war, all through the years of training, marching and fighting, music played a great part in the lives of sailors, soldiers and people. Whether we think of the sailor, keeping silent watch at the gates of the enemy, whether we think of the soldier, making his long marches and holding his exposed trenches in France and Belgium, or whether we think of a sorely tried people at home, we cannot dissociate music from these things. Every soldier knows that, without the marching song, each mile he had to trudge grew longer and more tiresome, and that, under the inspiration of "It's a long way to Tipperary" and "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag," and the like, he did great exploits and "got there" in the end.

"And here the singer for his art,
Not all in vain may plead,
The song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."—TENNYSON.

Then, music is perhaps the chief handmaid to religion, which again has much to do in stabilising and refreshing the mind. The intoned service, hymns, such as the *Te Deum*, the musical response, along with the deep-toned accompaniment of the organ, each and all of these are confessedly great aids in awing and quieting the mind of the worshipper.

If music, therefore, has such power and charm in religion, and in times of national strain and stress, it is a fair inference that it also has considerable and special values for the class of people with whom we are especially dealing. It is to the elucidation and application of these values, as they affect highly strung and nervous temperaments, that we now direct our attention.

It is not easy to explain precisely the nature of music, or fully to account for its subtle and powerful influence upon the mind. But it is clear that music is the outward expression of tune, pitch and harmony which are found, more or less, in the world of Nature.

There is a vast difference between noise and music, although Dr. Johnson did not appear to think so. Nature is rarely, if ever, noisy; she is always and persistently musical. Indeed, it may be said that music is just one mode of expressing that law of

harmony which exists in and behind all life. As Byron put it—

> "There's music in the sighing of the wind:
> There's music in the gushing of the rill,
> There's music in all things,
> If men had ears to hear it."

The appeal of music, therefore, to those suffering from nervous disorders, would seem to be direct and natural. It is a reminder of the normal healthy state. It is a call to return to those conditions which underlie a perfect and harmonious mental life.

One of the wonderful things about music is the extraordinary way in which it fathoms and embraces the whole realm of emotion. There is scarcely an emotion, in all human experience, to which music does not make some appeal. It can stir the best in us and the worst. It can exhilarate and inspire, as it can relax and depress. And its all-embracing influence is the more wonderful when we consider how simple and elementary is the basis upon which it rests. "There are but seven notes in the scale; make them fourteen," says John Henry Newman, "yet what a slender outfit for so vast an enterprise. What science brings so much out of so little? Is it possible that that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich and yet so simple, so intricate and yet so regulated, so various and yet so majestic, should be mere sound which is gone and perishes? No, they have escaped from some

higher sphere: they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound: they are echoes from our (eternal) Home."

Now, we hold that those suffering from nervous ailments are usually very responsive to the appeal which music makes. As Herbert Spencer has said, "the strong capacity which we have for being so affected by melody and harmony may be taken to imply that it is within the possibilities of our natures to realise those intenser delights they dimly suggest."

This is high doctrine. But we are convinced that there is a large element of truth in it. To love music, to turn to it in hours of ease or hours of strain, is to protest against mental disorder and undue emotional excitement. There is hope for the man or woman who can find in music mental rest, or inspiration, or relaxation. And the hope lies in the fact that, in this way, they are dimly seeking what they have more or less lost, that inward poise and calm without which life is vain.

First.—It is worthy of note that music has a stimulating effect upon the body. We ourselves know that singing has a direct and helpful influence upon the physical development of children, especially in relation to the throat and the chest. A simple test will show us that, by putting the finger upon the pulse of a child, and inducing it to sing, it will be found that the circulation of the blood is stimulated, and, since a healthy flow of the blood is of

first importance, it will readily be seen that music is a means to this end.

Further, many most interesting experiments have been made as to the effects of music upon the appetite and the process of digestion. "Singing always makes boys hungry," says Dr. Joseph Bridge. This is easy to understand, when we remember what takes place in the act of singing. It means, at least, more air for the lungs, and so a greater amount of oxygen for the purpose of absorption. Add to this the fact that singing implies a better development of the organs of respiration, and we realise that, by this and other means, the process of digestion is quickened, and the general health invigorated.

Now, it is remarkable that singing is rarely indulged in by those suffering from serious nervous trouble. Song is usually the outward sign of a measure of inward harmony, and where this inward peace is lacking, as it is to some extent in cases such as we have in mind, we can hardly expect much expression in the form of song.

We are convinced, therefore, that the special class under consideration cannot do better than give themselves to song as much as possible. In church, in company, at home, and even alone, the singing habit is one of the best we can cultivate. It is good to listen to others singing. It is better to sing ourselves. If possible, we should study at least the elements of the art of singing, and especially the art of breathing, which is involved in doing so. In

this way, we believe much may be done to quicken and stimulate our tired and languishing nerves.

Second.—Music is also a delightful means of relaxation. We have spoken of the need of relaxation in a previous chapter. We need say nothing here, therefore, except to emphasise the fact that, for those whom we particularly have in mind, the constant need is the easing of the unnatural tension of their minds. It is this abnormal mental tension which is frequently the source of the trouble, and it is impossible to continue in this state for long without incurring serious consequences. If the mind is stretched beyond its limits, the whole nervous system is bound to collapse sooner or later.

Music is one of the best means of relieving this tension. It brings relief by providing us with a pleasant means of expression. The simple fact is that, the class of people under consideration, are so susceptible and so sensitive that they receive more impressions than the mind can absorb. Unless these impressions are reacted to, and some natural outlet is provided, there is bound to ensue some kind of explosion, followed by nerve trouble.

Music is one of the best means of expression and relaxation, since it is an appeal to the emotions. Some say it is this and nothing more. As we have seen, however, this is not the case. Emotion, thought, and action, are related each to the others. Hence it is possible so to appeal to the emotions, by

means of music, as to influence for good not only the mind, but the whole man.

One of the strange things about music is its inherent tendency towards melancholy. Jessica speaks for many of us when she says—

"I am never merry when I hear sweet music."

Perhaps this is why music makes a special appeal to, and affords real help for, the class we have always in mind. Music fits each and every mood, the mood of melancholy no less than the mood of cheerfulness. It rejoices with those who rejoice, and weeps with those who weep. It brings to the mind that touch of sympathy and healing which has its origin in the unseen. It gives expression to that element of sadness which exists in the nature of things, and which exists, to a painful degree, in those whose nervous system is strained and overwrought.

We are excited and irritable, at the close of the day, let us suppose. Things have gone wrong during our business hours. Feelings, and even passions, have been aroused, and our minds seem, as a result, to be full of what Professor William James calls "bottled lightning." At such times it is good to compose oneself whilst one listens to songs like "The Sands o' Dee," "Bois épais," or "Abide with me."

Better for some, perhaps, is it to sit quietly in an adjoining room and to listen to pianoforte pieces like "Au bord de la fontaine," by Heller; or

"Erotik," by Grieg; or "Deux Arabesques," by Debussy. In this way, the mind is pleasantly relaxed, and due and suitable expression is given to many hours of heaped-up impressions. This is a sure way of avoiding those mental explosions which are apt to take place when one's emotions are not allowed to evaporate quietly and easily. It is also in direct accord with the psychological dictum, "no impression without proportionate expression." We are convinced that one of the most commonly neglected needs of victims to nerves is just this constant habit of expression, and, in so far as music is a means to that end, we cannot afford to neglect it.

Third.—A further point of view from which music may be regarded is that of its calming or pacifying influence upon the mind. Much nervous energy is wasted because of these storms of emotional excitement, to which most highly strung people are subject. The need for such people is not "toning up" so much as "toning down," and, beyond all doubt, certain forms of music are excellent for this purpose.

It may not always be possible to prove these things to demonstration. Common experience, however, testifies to the fact that music has the power of calming and composing the distressed mind. It induces, at least, an approach to the state of sleep, and so creates the conditions for physical and mental rest. There is even medical authority for this view, since it has been proved that, by ac-

celerating the circulation of the blood, cerebral pressure is reduced, and so nervous excitement is allayed.

It has also been pointed out that as staccato passages, played swiftly and boldly upon the violin, agitate and give lively pleasure to the mind, so soft adagio movements sooth and pacify it, giving it the most exquisite sense of calm and quiet delight. Of music which merely amuses or relaxes, in a general way, there is abundance. The need is for a more specific adaptation, so as definitely to meet the various moods to which the highly tensed mind is subject. The common need is for that form of music which, as Tennyson says—

> "Gentler on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids on tired eyes."

The kind of selections we have in mind are those for the pianoforte, such as Cyril Scott's "Vesperale"; "to a Water Lily," and "At an old trysting place," by Macdowell; "Automne," by Chaminade; Chopin "Nocturnes"; Liszt's "Liebestraum"; Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," and many others.

The writer has proved that to sit in an adjoining room when the mind is weary and spent, and to give oneself up to such music, is to get into touch with the spirit of peace and repose. One should not make the common mistake of assuming a strained attitude in listening. The way to listen to such music at such times is not to bring too much

attention to bear upon it, but to give oneself up to it, allowing both feeling and thought to be played upon in a natural and unrestrained manner.

Quite frequently people are fatigued after listening for some time to the most delightful music. Instead of being refreshed they are exhausted. The reason is that the mind is held stretched to the highest point of attention. Here, as in other directions, the need is for relaxation, and it is when we have learnt some measure of this art, the art of unlimbering the mind, that music makes its most helpful appeal. It is thus that we realise the healing power of rhythm and tone:

> "A tone
> Of some world far from ours
> Where music, and moonlight, and feeling are one."

Fourth.—Then there are times when the mind needs rousing and inspiration, times when the eyes of the mind have become inverted, and when there is a tendency towards dreamy inaction. Such times and moods are well known by those with whom we are especially dealing. We are confident that at such times, and for such people, certain kinds of music may be stimulating in the highest degree.

Generally speaking, the sensations produced in the mind vary according to pitch and tone. The higher the pitch the more exciting the sensation. The lower the pitch the less exciting, and, therefore, the more soothing.

In hours of gloom and depression, therefore, it is the more exciting forms of music which are helpful. The allegro, owing to the quick and short impressions it makes upon the auditory nerves, gives the mind a lively and agreeable sensation, fills the spirit with delight, and surprisingly invigorates the whole mental and nervous machine. As Dr. Chomet says, "agitez progressivement le lymphatique par une musique forte et puissante; calmez le nerveux par des melodies suaves et douces."

After all that may be said respecting the specific effects of music upon the mind, and the nerves generally, for the plain man, experience counts for most. We know, if we have at all considered the matter, what kinds of music stimulate or pacify us best. We know, for example, that one of the most inspiring and exciting compositions ever written is the "Marseillaise."

Happily we are the heirs of a rich store of inspiring song and musical composition. Either by means of the voice, the pianoforte, the violin, or even a pianola, an inexhaustible source of inspiration and delight is at our disposal. And what we are anxious to impress upon the reader is the necessity for making constant use of it.

Life would be far happier and more buoyant, not to speak of its being more efficient, than it is if we paid a little more attention to the appeal made to us by sweet and inspiring music. We have no manner of doubt that, if we are to meet successfully the

increasing stress and strain of the future, we shall do it best by availing ourselves more fully of the soothing and exhilarating influence of what has been called the healing art.

Among such healing influences, we are familiar with the following, and can heartily recommend them to others: Chopin's Waltzes and Mazurkas; Grieg's "Morning Song"; Macdowell's "Brer Rabbit"; "Finlandia," by Sibelius; the "Handelian Rhapsody," and "Danse Nègre," by Cyril Scott. But most of our readers, who are fond of good music, will be able to recall many others. It is sufficient here to remind ourselves of the riches which are within reach, leaving each one to use them according to his or her own needs and requirements.

What we have endeavoured to do, in this chapter, is to point out a few of the specific values of music; but the half has not been told. Its possibilities are almost endless. It may be used or it may be abused. It may do us good, or it may do us harm. But only an elementary knowledge of the nature of music, and the laws of harmony, is sufficient to convince us that, whilst it may pacify, exhilarate, inspire and afford expression for the mind, it also has the power of giving discipline, and control, and purity to the emotions. As Carlyle has said, "Music is a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the infinite and lets us for moments gaze into it." It

is these occasional glimpses of the infinite that most highly tensed minds need, a sense of the greatness and beauty and grandeur of life, a feeling of kinship with the ultimate reality,

> "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
> And the round ocean and the living air."

And if song and melody, and the finer forms of music generally, if these do anything to minister to the mind on this high plane, then we owe it to ourselves to pay them due attention. The discordant note which is often found in so many lives is unnatural. We are made for peace and calm, since we come of the calm source of all things. It is because we believe this that we have ventured to put our thoughts into these pages. It is because we know how common mental unrest is that we have given much time and attention to the way of peace and rest, as these come through healthy nerves and a disciplined mind.

CHAPTER XX

SELF-EDUCATION

Those who have followed carefully what has been said in the foregoing chapters will have realised that, for those who are the victims of nervous troubles, what should be aimed at is not so much methods of treatment as a wise and rational system of life. Such people should, at the very outset, accept the peculiar temperament which is usually their lot. This may be done without consenting to the weaknesses and limitations which are mostly associated with it.

The highly strung temperament has undoubtedly serious drawbacks. It has also many compensations, since, in the lives of this special class, there are mostly present the best of materials, out of which an effective and happy personality may be built up. In such cases, however, it must never be forgotten that the first thing to do is to realise the need for self-education. Prevention is better than cure, and it is only as the mind and the nervous system are trained and developed that we can hope to be at ease and at home with ourselves.

A large amount of the sorrow and misery of men's

lives, apart altogether from moral and other factors, is due to the fact that one's powers and abilities are not adjusted to one's duties and tasks. The education of oneself, therefore, becomes increasingly important, not only as the road to efficiency, but also as a means to a measure of mental ease and composure.

Further, largely owing to self-ignorance, it will be found, upon reflection, that much of the unrest and misery which come upon us is self-imposed. We frequently complain of our environment, of our temperament, and of our bad fortune, thus attempting to explain our unrest and discontent, whilst all the time the cause of our troubles is traceable to lack of self-discipline. We imagine that given conditions other than those which we have, life would be very different. The fact is that usually the source of our unrest is not in our surroundings but in ourselves. It is always true that, for each and all of us, the kingdom of heaven is within and nowhere else.

It should be said, however, that even self-discipline is not everything. It is not an end, but a means to greater ends. The end of all discipline is character and service. Where the mind is not under the compulsion of the ideal, be the mental faculties never so well trained, there cannot be present that sense of ease and inward self-approval which are essential to a happy and effective existence. We discover and develop our real selves by discipline, and we can only enjoy the fruits of such discipline

as we lose ourselves in the wider and higher interests of life. As Professor Lecky finely says, "It is one of the laws of our being that by seeking interests rather than seeking pleasures we can best encounter the gloom of life. By throwing their whole nature into the interests of others men most effectively escape introspection."

Still, we can be and do nothing worthy without self-training. This is the centre and starting-point of one's life. Without a centre there can be no circumference, and without a disciplined and cultured self we cannot even see life's larger interests, and so cannot enter into that peace of mind to which those subject to nervous disorders are so commonly strangers.

First, then, it should be repeatedly emphasised that the keynote of a strong and radiant life is to be found in control in every direction, bodily, mental, moral, and especially emotional. Nearly all the appeals which are made to us from time to time, whether they come from art or philosophy or religion, are mostly appeals for self-control. And this is but natural, since it is along this rough road that all true betterment comes.

As we have seen elsewhere, the problem of self-discipline or self-control is largely the problem of how to develop and regulate our mental faculties. It is because we lack will-power, and because we allow any and every thought or feeling to invade

the mind, that we suffer so many things, and are often the victims of melancholy and despair.

More than any of us imagine, our whole mental outlook and general condition are determined by our subconscious selves. The stuff out of which our subconscious life is built up is the thoughts, feelings, hopes, desires, ambitions and fears which daily find an entrance into our minds. Once these enter our minds and are forgotten, and pass out of consciousness, they are not lost but pass into that other realm to which the term subconscious has been given. And the tragedy of life is this: that often, all unknown to ourselves, these acts of the mind, once more or less conscious and now relegated to oblivion as we think, keep rising up, clouding, harassing, and disturbing our present outlook and mentality. It is thus that our imagination becomes inflamed, and that we become fearful and apprehensive, the mind being troubled and affrighted by the thought shadows of the forgotten past.

What is needed is a steady, patient, daily ordering of our thought life. Let there be a deliberate determination to get and keep the mind fairly in hand at the beginning of each day. Resolve, upon rising, that to-day shall be your day, and that nothing shall seriously turn your mind away from the next thing. As the day proceeds, see that you feel cheerful and are inwardly composed. Force yourself to speak kindly to some one at hand, occasionally, and rigorously check any tendency towards

envy or jealousy or other kind of small-mindedness. Avoid scandal and all uncharitableness. At odd moments recall and mentally repeat any texts, bits of poetry, quotations or sayings which may be lying about in the mind. And, at the close of the day, ponder over what has been agreeable and good, casting out of the mind the unpleasant and the bad. Along such lines we are sure much may be done to win and maintain the whip hand over the mind.

Then, self-education must proceed along the line of deliberate exercise, especially exercise of the mental faculties. This is of the very first importance for the special class with whom we are dealing. Naturally, there is a strain of laziness in most minds, though, in the minds of those suffering from nervous troubles it is not laziness so much as inability that is present. In any case, the brain, like the other parts of the body, needs testing and training and exercising.

We strongly recommend those whom we are especially addressing, therefore, to set themselves certain simple and definite mental exercises for each day. There need not be, indeed there should not be, very much time or energy given to it. But such a *régime*, though it be of a simple character, will prove of immense help, not only in toning up the mental faculties, but also in steadying and maintaining the balance of the nervous system.

Such a *régime* we have already outlined in Chapter XII., dealing with mental control. One should

not attempt too much at a time. The wise thing is to do a little each day, and, if possible, at the same hour. By this means we shall not only do much to develop and maintain our mental powers, but we shall at the same time form the habit of order and method, a habit which is of vital importance to those suffering from nervous disorders.

Further, self-education or self-control will become much easier if we do our best to develop and maintain a sane and balanced view of life. The trouble with most highly strung people is that self occupies too large a place in their mental outlook. They stand at such a mental angle as to stand in their own light, and hence it is that they spend so many of their days in the shadowland of melancholy and sometimes despair.

It is a good and necessary thing to be aware of oneself. But the moment our self-awareness hinders and prevents the mind from seeing life in its wider relations, it becomes a serious weakness. We should accustom the mind to look at distances, to look out at the skyline, and not to feel about things, or to judge things, without a constant sense of the vastness and greatness of human life. It is good, therefore, to ponder over such words as Universe, Heaven, Eternity, Mankind, Brotherhood, Society, Truth, Righteousness, Holiness and Peace. There is a breadth and an airiness about such words which enlarges and calms the minds of those who are beset

with the cares and worries which result from undue self-consciousness.

It must also be kept in mind that life is not designed for man's comfort and happiness. Its aim is rather the education and redemption of the race, of which each of us is but a humble unit. One's thoughts should not be directed so much towards having an easy and happy time as upon our being useful and efficient. Happiness is never an end. It is a by-product, and they know most about it who do not make it their aim. For those whom we are especially addressing, therefore, it is a wise and practical philosophy to do one's best and leave the rest, to do the next thing and not the next but one, and to believe in your fellows as you believe in yourself.

It is also important to educate oneself so as not to be constantly and mentally projecting one's own sensitiveness into the lives of others. Many people endure nameless miseries and suffering because, owing to an inflamed imagination, they read their own highly sensitive nature into other lives. The horse which falls in the street, the cry of a little child, the dog torn and bleeding in fight, the patient in the operating-room, the agony portrayed on the picture film, and the tragedy reported in the newspaper—these and many other forms of suffering so play upon the emotions that many, lacking control, spend their days in carrying burdens and enduring tortures with which they should have little or nothing to do.

The fact is that, although there is much suffering

in the world, there is not as much as the highly sensitive person imagines. At any rate, it is not such as warrants the horror and shrinking with which it is associated in the minds of some. Nor should it be forgotten that much of the world's suffering is but the occasion, if not the cause, of the noblest and best that life holds.

In conclusion, it should be said that the practical value of all that is said in these pages is based upon the assumption that one ardently desires to make the most and best of oneself. Ultimately it is the power of purpose in us that matters. All theory is vain unless there is the will to put theory into practice. Potentially, there is sufficient will-power in each and all of us for the needs and demands of a healthy self-realisation. Moreover, it is by using the will-power which we have that we win still more.

And, for our encouragement, it should be said that, once we rouse ourselves and determine to rise up and be or act, there are innumerable aids and forces at hand ready to come to our help. "All nature is on the side of the man who tries to rise." These influences and forces are partly within and partly without, and apart altogether from those mental forces which come to our aid, when we honestly try, there are moral and even spiritual agencies which come forth to help us the moment we stand erect and assume the prerogative which is our natural birthright.

The mind is made for order and efficiency and peace. But it cannot put itself in order. We ourselves must do that, and, though religion and a straight life can do much to further this great end, we ourselves must take the initiative, working along common sense and psychological lines.

"We do not what we ought,
What we ought not we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through;
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers."

Begin the important and interesting work of self-education at once. Begin by believing in yourself. Every day that you persevere will bring its own reward, and every month that passes will help to reconcile you to, and more completely fit you for, your calling and lot. Do not expect too much at first, and do not expect that too quickly. Be content to do your duty by your mind to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day, and, as sure as you keep a stout heart and persevere, you will rise upon the stepping-stones of your past self to higher and better things.

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